

The Northern Cape Frontier Zone, 1700-c.1815

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Abstract

This thesis is a history of the northern Cape frontier zone between the years 1700 and c.1815. It describes and analyses the interactions which occurred between the principal peoples of this spatio-temporal area as the Cape colony expanded into the arid heartland of South Africa. The study's geographical focus of attention moves, with the frontier zone itself, from the banks of the Berg River in the south-western Cape of 1700 to beyond the northern banks of the Orange River in the early nineteenth century. The western and eastern limits of this area are formed by the Atlantic Ocean on the one hand and the eastern frontier district of Graaff-Reinet on the other.

Within the frontier zone of this vast and hitherto neglected region, it is argued, there emerged, during the course of the eighteenth century, a set of practices and attitudes which, precisely because they were prototypical, exerted a profound influence on the subsequent colonial history of South Africa. Although developments within the northern Cape frontier zone are not seen as being more important than those which were taking place elsewhere in the colony (such as the south-western Cape or the eastern Cape frontier zone) they are seen as being equally important. Our picture of eighteenth century colonial society in South Africa has, until now, been a lopsided one in that the archival evidence for the largest part of the colony - the northern Cape frontier zone - has been under utilised. This thesis, based on extensive archival research, attempts to rectify this imbalance by discussing key themes in northern frontier history as they emerged and developed over a period of more than one hundred and ten years.

A primary concern of this study is to provide an account of the dynamics of colonial expansion which is based on a consideration of both the principal productive activity of the frontier zone - pastoral production - and the most important political and military institution of the frontier zone - the commando. In the course of this account the focus of attention falls on those colonists who took up the life of semi-nomadic pastoralists (*trekboers*) in the Cape interior. Related to this, and of equal importance, is an examination of the impact which colonial expansion had on the Khoisan societies of the Cape interior. The processes by which these societies were either conquered, annihilated or incorporated into colonial society are discussed. So too are the ways in which the Khoisan resisted colonial domination. Thus, a large part of this thesis deals with the various forms or practices which shaped intergroup relationships on the frontier, ranging from genocidal warfare, at one extreme, to symbiotic co-operation and collaboration at the other.

Particular attention is paid to the conditions under which many Khoisan became unfree labourers within the colonial economy. The many instances of primary resistance, guerrilla warfare, rebellion, flight and protest which are discussed in these pages serve as testimony to the fact that the subjugation of the Khoisan was neither quick nor easy. Indeed, the pervasive violence arising from the protracted struggle for dominance in the northern Cape frontier zone is, in itself, an important thematic concern of this study.

Although the major protagonists of the frontier zone were the colonists and Khoisan there were other important frontier societies which are discussed here. New groups emerged as a result of the processes of interaction and acculturation taking place within the frontier zone. People of mixed racial or cultural origin (known in the parlance of the day as "Bastaards" or "Bastaard-Hottentots") gradually acquired a new cultural and political identity. Some of them, in an attempt to escape the increasing discrimination which they experienced in the colony, removed themselves beyond the limits of colonial settlement altogether. These Oorlam groups, as they became known, played an important part in the history of the frontier zone and their contribution is given due consideration. Also important were a variety of other colonial fugitives - runaway slaves, Company deserters, bandits, murderers and assorted criminals - whose impact on both Khoisan societies and colonial farmers was frequently immense. The significance of such *drosters* (deserters) is acknowledged here.

The thesis concludes with a consideration of those forces which tended towards promoting the social, economic and political closure of the frontier zone. In this respect the exertions of missionaries become particularly important since they first appear in the northern Cape in the last years of the eighteenth century and herald the arrival of a new era in frontier history. Missionary activity was, amongst other things, a symptom of the desire for greater state control over the turbulent regions of the colony's northern limits. The state-approved conversion of the leader of the most powerful Oorlam bandit group (1815) marked an important symbolic moment in the closure of the frontier zone. Even more important, however, was the promulgation of the Hottentot Proclamation of 1809 for this signalled that the new British government of the Cape intended to recognise and entrench the colonists' subjugation of their Khoisan and "Bastaard-Hottentot" labourers. For the first time there was a government at the Cape powerful enough to impose its will on the frontier regions. Unfortunately, by backing the colonists, this government endorsed and ensured the outcome of the long process of struggle, decided in the northern frontier zone, for the land, labour and livestock resources of the Khoisan of the Cape interior.

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Acknowledgements

A long time has passed since I first began writing this thesis. Like the eighteenth century hunters and herders of the Cape interior (who form such a large part of this study) I seemed to be moving at the pace of an ox, towards an ever receding point on an illimitable horizon. The journey itself, the endless trek over fascinating terrain, seemed to sustain me more than the promise of arrival. Indeed, without the faith, encouragement and advice of friends, colleagues and institutions, I would still be plodding on, beyond the limits of my subject and the patience of my readers, into oblivion. But the time has come to call a halt and to take stock.

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Preface

TIME BECOMES HUMAN TO THE EXTENT THAT IT IS ARTICULATED THROUGH A NARRATIVE MODE.¹

When I first began work on this thesis the most important question in my mind was "What happened to the Khoisan societies of the Cape?" It was clear to me that the answer to this question was to be found in the crucial years of the eighteenth century, during which time Dutch colonists advanced into the Cape interior and confronted the Khoisan with a decisive challenge: submit, retreat or perish. I discovered that there was no detailed or satisfactory account of this seemingly most central episode in South African history: the colonial conquest of the Khoisan of the Cape interior.² The majority of historians, if they noticed the process of conquest at all, were quick to anchor their narratives to the drama of the eastern frontier where, after 1770, the conflict between the Xhosa and the colonists seemed to be of overriding importance. The history of Khoisan-colonial contact between 1700 and 1770 was a virtual lacuna and, as a post-1770 phenomenon, was treated largely as a side-show of the eastern frontier itself. Confronted with the task of rectifying this omission I decided to concentrate on the little known northern frontier zone and leave the better known eastern frontier to others.

The paucity of historical commentary and secondary material forced me to start my enquiry virtually from scratch. I was particularly keen to consider both sides of the frontier and attempt to recover the hitherto neglected experience of the Khoisan as well as that of the better documented colonists. I realised that my starting point would therefore have to be a study of the pre-colonial Khoisan and the acquisition of a knowledge of the terrain and environment in which they had lived. Thanks to the generous enthusiasm of members of the Spatial Archaeology Research Unit at the University of Cape Town I was able to go some way towards realising these ambitions. Though I will never be more than an amateur archaeologist the experience gained in their company has served to introduce me to the practicalities and complexities of interpreting the archaeological record. I certainly have no qualms about including archaeological evidence amongst my sources - (stone, bone and rock paintings also tell stories to the skilled reader) - and much in this thesis concerning the Cape Khoisan has been learnt from my archaeological mentors during the course of numerous discussions and on a variety of field trips. But it was by enabling

1. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago, 1983), Vol. 1, p.52.

2. See introduction below for an account of the relevant historiography.

me to spend time in the outdoors that the archaeologists gave me access to the most valuable primary resource of all - the land itself. Thanks to them I have spent many days contemplating the various environments described in this thesis: the boiling sand of the Sandveld; the fragrant fynbos of the Cape Fold Mountains; the parched plains of the Tanqua Karoo; the sombre ridges of the Roggeveld escarpment; the flower-strewn semi-deserts of Namaqualand; the tragic melancholy of empty Bushmanland and the long, strong waters of the Orange River. Without such knowledge this thesis would have lacked an important dimension.

It was clear, however, that if I wished to assess the impact of colonialism on the Khoisan societies of the interior I would have to immerse myself in the historical records of the eighteenth century Cape colony. Of particular relevance here were those records which dealt with the northern frontier zone, a region which, during the eighteenth century, fell under the jurisdiction of the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch.³ Since the records are in the archaic Dutch of that period it was necessary for me to learn how to understand them, a process including both translation of their language and interpretation of their content. My first task, that of translating or comprehending the Dutch, was achieved more by a process of osmosis and endurance than by linguistic skill. Whilst the Dutch penned by officials at Stellenbosch was usually similar to that of their educated colleagues in Cape Town, Batavia or Amsterdam, the Dutch of the frontier farmers was markedly different. Amongst the incoming letters of *veldwagtmeesters* and private individuals are barely legible specimens, composed by barely literate people (in conditions obviously not conducive to calligraphic refinement) whose language was neither Dutch nor Afrikaans (but something in between) and whose style was innocent of punctuation, orthography or grammar. The only way to understand such writing was to recreate it by copying it out in longhand, hoping that mimetic rhythm might clarify the obscurity of an illegible word or phrase. Photocopying was both useless and expensive. I thus copied hundreds of pages by hand and, after several years, could understand nearly all that I read. How, though, to interpret it?

After so long an exposure to documents generated by colonists and colonial officials was there not a danger that I would end up with a distorted view of history, forgetting that I had originally planned to write about both sides of the frontier and fooling myself into believing that the documentary references to the Khoisan which I had found were adequate representations of their presence? Would I forget that recorded history is usually the record that dominant cultures leave

3. See maps between pp.278-9 for the extent of the Stellenbosch district at various times during the eighteenth century.

behind them as they relegate the dominated to the shadowy status of "people without history"⁴ I was acutely aware that I had now become deeply involved with the lives and stories of certain frontier colonists - because they were comparatively well-documented - and that it was going to be extremely difficult to acquire the same degree of knowledge about the less well-documented Khoisan. Those Khoisan who featured in the records did so primarily as victims, with whom it was possible to sympathise, but for whom it was almost impossible to speak.

Such concerns were not, of course, original for they have preoccupied all historians who have tried to rescue the losers of history from the "enormous condescension of posterity".⁵ Many, indeed, are the distinguished historians who have taught us how to recover the voices of the marginalised and oppressed from the most unpromising or unlikely sources. It is the nature of historical records to present a partial (meaning both biased and incomplete) view of the past and it is the duty of historians to be aware of both the limitations and potentialities of the records in question. Inevitably, however, much is unrecoverable, and it is history itself which has made it unrecoverable. This is a paradox which should be especially obvious to those historians who deal with frontier zones, especially instances of the great, global frontier zone which accompanied the expansion of European power during modern times. Greg Denning, an historian of eighteenth century European expansion in the Pacific, has written of the beach as being the typical frontier zone of encounter between "Natives" and "Strangers". In his narrative of the encounter between the mutineers of HMS Bounty with the Tahitian islanders he writes words which underline the futility of any attempt to recreate a pristine, pre-colonial past:

Until this moment the history of the Bounty has been "ours", the "Strangers". We understand the Ship and recognise its history because in some way it mirrors ourselves. We are joined to it by language, by a sense that the questions we ask about it are questions about ourselves. But now as we step onto a beach at Tahiti that part of the Bounty is also somebody else's. We will not altogether understand it. The Native in it will be partly irrecoverable, partly so other that we will understand it only dimly. But because the Bounty Strangers stepped onto a Native's beach then, we the Strangers are now bound together with the Native by that contact. There is now no Native past without the Stranger, no Stranger without the Native. No one can hope to be mediator or interlocutor in that opposition of Native and Stranger, because no one is gazing at it untouched by the power that is in it. Nor can anyone speak just for the one, just for the other. There is no escape from the politics of our knowledge, but that politics is not in the past. That politics is in the present. There are men and women

4. See Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, 1982) for a discussion of this topic.

5. The famous phrase of E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p.13.

killing themselves in the Pacific now because Strangers stepped onto the Native's beaches. We have to write our history of the Pacific as the history of Native and Stranger Bound Together because we are bound together by that past reaching into the present. Who can change what was done? Who can return life or punish the dead? The only world we can change is that of the present of which we are a part. That world now has been encompassed by Native and Stranger alike. That world encompassed, the ways in which Native and Stranger possessed and possess one another, is the object of our mutual and separate histories.⁶

The world of the frontier zone, then, is the world in which Native and Stranger become bound together, and if our picture of that world is partly irrecoverable it is because in the process of that binding together some things were destroyed whilst others were created. Documentary evidence, with its distortions and selections, is itself an indicator of what was becoming lost in the past whilst the present was being made. Thus, even the aporias of a history based on documentary evidence can be revealing, gesturing mutely to that which vanished most permanently, most decisively. The nature or character of the documents in question is, therefore, an important component in shaping our narratives about the past.

Those documents of eighteenth century Dutch colonial rule at the Cape which are housed in the Cape Archives are official documents and, like official documents anywhere, tend to reflect official concerns. The stories which are preserved in government archives are therefore very often stories which one set of officials tells to another and are concerned with themes of state control, finance, law and order. Where private individuals enter the historical record it is usually in their capacity of subjects of the state, receiving or responding to instructions. Isolation and underpopulation combined to make the archival records relating to the northern Cape frontier zone sparser and less detailed than those of districts - such as Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet - which were smaller, more densely populated and whose administrative centres were more centrally situated within their boundaries. The district of Stellenbosch was a vast, under-administrated area whose *drostdy* lay hundreds of kilometres to the south of the expanding frontier regions. The white or Christian population of the region was an estimated 7 256 in 1798 and most of these people were to be found in the well watered agricultural lands around the town of Stellenbosch in the south-western Cape.⁷ Further to the north colonial farmers were few and far between, many days journey beyond the reach of the *landdrost* or his deputies. In the northern frontier districts the authority of the *landdrost* (and behind him that of the governor of the Cape)

6. Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.178-179.

7. John Barrow, *Travels Into the Interior of Southern Africa*, Part Two (London, 1804), p.361.

was supposed to be upheld by a handful of *veldwagtmeesters* or *veldkorporaals*, officials whose principal function became that of organising or leading commandos. The correspondence between the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch and his *veldwagtmeesters* is thus a major source of information about the northern Cape frontier zone even though much of it is concerned with Khoisan attacks against the colonists and the business of organising retaliatory commandos.

Information of a more detailed and revealing nature is contained in the criminal records of the district of Stellenbosch. In these pages, recorded so as to provide evidence in criminal cases, we can catch glimpses of non-official lives caught up in official enquiries. Many of those who appeared before the Court of Stellenbosch (important cases were sometimes forwarded to the Council of Justice at Cape Town) were Khoikhoi. Sometimes they appeared as accused, sometimes as defendants, but, most significantly, they were regarded as being subjects of the colony and hence under the protection or punishment of its laws. Though the legal status of Khoikhoi was, in some respects, inferior to that of whites, and the courts frequently found in favour of whites at the expense of the Khoikhoi, there is evidence that some Khoikhoi did seek the protection of the courts against their masters.⁸ This utilisation of, or participation in, the colony's legal system by the Khoikhoi has resulted in their "capture" by the records. Thanks to the operation of Roman-Dutch law at the Cape we can read, in the statements and summaries of court proceedings, detailed stories about people whose lives would normally have gone unrecorded. But there are, naturally, some problems of interpretation connected with the reading of such stories.

The *dramatis personae* of court records often appear before the historian as they appeared before interrogators long ago - as criminals or supplicants before a court of law.⁹ In the theatre of the court room narrative forms can be expected to adopt fairly conventional patterns, shaped by the structures of the legal system and the contemporary sense of what would constitute a "guilty" or "innocent" reading of the events in question. Thus the prosecution would emplot events to produce a guilty verdict and the defence, or defendant, would emplot them to produce an innocent verdict. Historical evidence which is based on the records of court proceedings should, therefore, take into account the social space in which the criminal, or civil records were produced as well as the larger narrative forms which might have influenced the presentation of the evidence. Such

8. For further discussion on these points see chapter seven below.

9. Carlo Ginzburg has given us several perceptive accounts of the historical use of criminal records in his "Witchcraft and Popular Piety: Notes on a Modenese Trial of 1519" in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1989), pp.1-16 and in *The Worm and the Cheese* (London, 1980).

forms might have been modelled on Biblical narratives, folk tales, traditional wisdom or legal knowledge. They were also tailored towards making a favourable impression on the court.¹⁰ Very often, however, the people who did the tailoring were not the accused nor the defendant but the court scribes and officials who wrote the evidence up in a documentary form so that the court could deliberate upon written, rather than spoken evidence. Such evidence was presented in Dutch which meant that the testimony of Khoikhoi frequently had to be translated. We very seldom hear, even in translation, the authentic voice of the Khoikhoi coming through the court proceedings. Nor do we get much sense of the stories or narrative forms which might have influenced the ways in which Khoikhoi presented their statements or conceived of matters such as justice, punishment and retribution. In this respect the subsumption and almost total suppression of the Khoikhoi voice within the legal discourse of the colony is itself indicative of the fate of the Khoikhoi. It is harder still to detect evidence of Khoikhoi mentality in other official documents and it is only in the work of missionaries or anthropologists that we still find traces of the systems of meaning that helped the Khoikhoi to interpret the world before the white man arrived.

Surprisingly enough we are much better informed about the mental world of the San of the northern Cape than we are about that of the Khoikhoi. Thanks to the labours of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd, who collected oral material from San informants in the 1870s, we have a large collection of the folk lore, myths and stories of the San.¹¹ This is the material which has enabled us to understand, partially, the meaning of San rock art. Knowing their stories, or narratives, we are in a position to say something about the "reality" of the San and the way in which this reality was influenced by narrative forms. The San of the northern Cape were known to Bleek by the language which they spoke - /Xam - and it is appropriate to call them by this name. The /Xam used only one word for all narratives, namely *kum* (plural, *kukummi*). According to Hewitt: "There is no record of their making distinctions between kinds of narrative such as myth, legend or fable. All narratives were *kukummi* whether they related the activities of supernatural beings, humans or animals... The same word, however, was also used to mean conversation and news."¹² It will be argued later in the thesis that this inability to distinguish myth from reality was an important contributory factor in the demise of the San. Looking through the material in the Bleek - Lloyd collection one is struck by the ahistoricity of the narratives. Despite nearly two centuries of colonial contact there is virtually no reference, in the *kukummi* of the /Xam, to the forces of

10. See Natalie Zemon Davis' *Fiction in the Archives* (Cambridge, 1987) for a discussion of the way in which popular narrative forms influenced the presentation of legal evidence in early modern France.

11. See chapter six below.

12. Roger L. Hewitt, *Structure, Meaning and Ritual in the Narratives of the Southern San* (Hamburg, 1986), pp.47-48.

history which are destroying them. It is true that many of the stories involve violence and bodily dismemberment for the supernatural trickster hero, /Kaggen, who features in them. This may be seen as indicative of the world in which the /Xam lived, where hunter-gatherers were constantly having to outwit their hostile and violent neighbours.¹³ But the characters in the stories are animals. Human enemies are not named though certain animals probably represent different and menacing societies. Only in the genealogies of Bleek and Lloyd's informants may one see, in the violent deaths of recent ancestors and relatives, traces of the bloody history which was responsible for the extinction of the /Xam.¹⁴

The extent to which the Khoikhoi shared the same narratives as the San is problematic. There were common features in both Khoikhoi and San religion.¹⁵ Some stories, like how death came into the world, were shared but in others different meanings, values and world views become apparent. In one /Xam story, for instance, /Kaggen attempts to steal the sheep of the Ticks, a group of "black people who we do not visit" which different commentators see as representing either Korana or Tswana herdsmen. It seems, however, that this refers to the Korana for as Hewitt explains: "...a note relating to this narrative points out that the !Korana were thought of as black because they always seemed to be angry and violent".¹⁶ However one interprets the different versions of this story it seems clear that the /Xam drew a fundamental distinction between themselves, a hunter-gatherer group, and the Korana, a pastoralist group. There is a great deal more internal evidence in the /Xam narratives which points towards a unique, hunter-gatherer consciousness - a point which contradicts those who argue that Khoikhoi and San are basically interchangeable concepts.¹⁷ What Khoikhoi and San did have in common though was that their narratives proved to be inadequate when it came to understanding the realities of colonial conquest and Khoisan narratives were soon replaced by Christian or colonial ones. The fact that Khoisan narratives were part of an oral culture also made them vulnerable to the onslaught of literacy, a powerful force which accompanied colonisation and superseded the unwritten stories of the indigenes.

To argue that the narratives of the Khoisan were inadequate because they failed to discern

13. See Hewitt, *Structure, Meaning and Ritual*, pp.145-171. See also unpublished research paper by Ralph Austen on "African Trickster Tales", written in Department of History, University of Cape Town, 1992.

14. Jagger Library, University of Cape Town, W.H.I. Bleek and L. Lloyd, Unpublished Manuscripts, BC 151.

15. See Alan Barnard, *Hunters And Herders Of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.251-264.

16. Hewitt, *Structure, Meaning and Ritual*, p.230.

17. See chapter one for a discussion of this topic.

between myth and history is not to say that myth is not an extremely powerful, perhaps even necessary and inevitable, narrative form. Even in societies with a strong sense of history myth acts as a potent force, informing and underlying that history. The colonists who were responsible for the destruction of Khoisan culture were also bearers and makers of their own myths. In fact, one of the most interesting debates in South African history centres on the myth-making power of the frontier experience itself, with generations of historians believing that it was on the frontier that a distinctive South African identity emerged. These are issues which await further discussion. For the moment it is important to say something more about myth and its relationship to history.

Richard Slotkin, in his study of the mythology of the American frontier, defines mythology as:

a complex of narratives that dramatises the world vision and historical sense of a people or culture, reducing centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors. The narrative action of the myth-tale recapitulates that people's experience in their land, rehearses their visions of that experience in its relation to their gods and the cosmos, and reduces both experience and vision to a paradigm.¹⁸

"The mythology of a nation," he explains elsewhere, "is the intelligible mask of that enigma called the 'national character'."¹⁹ What myths did the colonial frontiersmen of the Cape carry with them? What myths did they help to create in the frontier zone itself? It is best to begin answering these questions by discussing the inherited myths that Europeans took with them as they began to colonise certain non-European portions of the globe.

Europeans had long believed in a fundamental dichotomy between civility and savagery. The European heartlands, i.e., the "known world", represented civilisation, where people looked like Europeans and practised the Christian religion. The further one went beyond the borders of civilization, however, the more likely one was to find wildness and savagery, the inverse, in other words, of civilisation. Such ideas rested on a number of sources: Biblical, classical and traditional. The Bible had taught that the world's centre was the Holy Land and the further from this centre one went the closer one drew to heathen savagery. Classical writers of Greece and Rome had also drawn a distinction between the civilised and the barbaric, the latter category of person being, obviously, people beyond the boundaries of Greece and Rome. The extremely influential Roman author, Pliny the Elder (d. AD 79) had written a book of natural history which was widely diffused during the Middle Ages. Pliny described how, the further one travelled from

18. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860* (Middletown, 1973), p.6.

19. Ibid., p.3.

the centres of Roman civilisation, the more likely one was to meet the monstrous human races: dog-headed people, cannibals, pygmies, cave dwellers who squeak like bats and live on snakes, amazons, neckless Blemmyae with their eyes in their shoulders, and many, many more such freaks. This world view was reinforced by the fabulous travel accounts of Sir John Mandeville whose book circulated widely in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was, alongside Marco Polo's Travels, one of the most important reference works consulted by Christopher Columbus.²⁰ European folk tales were full of wild-men, usually depicted as under-clothed forest dwellers or troglodytes. When Europeans sailed far south to the Cape - further south than any European had ever been - they therefore expected to encounter an inversion of the civilised order and were not slow to believe their expectations fulfilled in the persons and societies of the Khoikhoi of the Cape.²¹

Early European representations of the Khoikhoi, both verbal and visual, were predominantly negative as authors and artists stressed those aspects of Khoikhoi culture which reinforced expectations of savagery and wildness. Thus the near nakedness of the Khoikhoi was emphasised, along with all those customs - eating of loathsome food, unfamiliar language - which signalled to European audiences that they were learning about a society that was as far removed from civilised humanity as the Cape was from Europe.²² Once Europeans became aware that some of the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape did not keep livestock but lived as hunters and gatherers and were despised even by the Khoikhoi they were more certain than ever that such "Bushmen" must be on the outermost margins of human society, lacking, it seemed, such essential tokens of civility as political structures and religious institutions.

Buried deep within this myth of savagery was another entrenched tradition of European culture: the idea that, in certain circumstances, savages might be considered to be representatives of a lost state of innocence. Both Biblical and classical authority had taught that there had once been a

20. For a discussion of these themes see Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (London, 1990), pp.13-94.

21. On the theme of European preconceptions about the Cape and its inhabitants see M. van Wyk Smith's introduction to his book *Shades of Adamastor* (Grahamstown, 1988).

22. There is a growing literature on this subject. See M. van Wyk Smith, "'The Most Wretched of the Human Race': The Iconography of the Khoikhoi (Hottentots) 1500-1800", *History and Anthropology*, 1992, 5 (3-4), pp.285-320; A.B. Smith, "Different Facets of the Crystal: Early European Images of the Khoikhoi at the Cape, South Africa", in M. Hall and A. Markell, (eds.), *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape: The S. A. Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, Vol. 7, June 1993; E. Bassani and L. Tedeschi, "The Image of the Hottentot in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: An Iconographic Investigation", *Journal of the History of Collections*, 2, no.2, 1990, pp.157-186.

state of paradise on earth, of perfect harmony between man and nature. Distant artists in Europe occasionally depicted the Khoikhoi in the guise of Adam and Eve, pure in their nakedness, enjoying a life of idyllic pastoralism. The colonists of the Cape, however, suffered from no such illusions and the myth of the "noble savage" died an early death on the Cape frontier, having to be re-imported into the colony by educated travellers, influenced by Enlightenment ideas, in the late eighteenth century.²³

Other myths which were inherited, along with that of the savagery of Africans, were those which were part of the mental baggage of most Dutchmen at this time. The myths of Calvinism, for instance, encouraged a belief in the predetermined division of souls into the Damned or the Elect - a basic dichotomy which, in the colonies, was more easily understood as being one between Christian or heathen and comfortably placed alongside that of Civil or Savage. Myths associated with the rise of the Dutch nation state also played their part in creating influential narrative models. Just as the Netherlands had been won from the sea by the creation of strong dykes and canals (a process which involved the clear demarcation between nature and culture) so Dutch society found it necessary to erect strong barriers between itself and that which threatened its identity (Catholic Spain for instance) and individuals were urged to defend the sanctity of their soul by strict religious observance and irreproachable conduct. Prosperity, order and cleanliness were marks of the elect. Holland was the wealthiest nation on earth because it had been chosen by God. A rich man, therefore, was a good man.²⁴

If these, then, were some of the inherited myths of Dutch colonists at the Cape what were the myths that were made on the frontier? We should note that in the very act of exporting these myths to a colonial setting they underwent a transformation. In the first place, as Foucault has explained, colonies acted as heterotopias, that is special types of places in which specific values of the parent society were simultaneously "represented, contested and inverted".²⁵ Colonial frontiers, being even further removed from the parent society than the colony, were thus examples of an even more extreme form of heterotopia. Whilst some colonists (usually of the official or respectable strata) strove to realise an ideal (and hence distorted) form of Dutch society in the strange setting of a new country others (usually of the more marginal and oppressed strata) sought to liberate themselves from the conventions which had disadvantaged them by giving a

23. See for instance F. Le Vaillant, *Travels Into the Interior Parts of Africa*, 2 vols (London, 1790).

24. See Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches* (London, 1987) for an account of cultural forces in Dutch society.

25. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, spring 1986, p.24.

new interpretation to the meaning of Dutch identity. The frontier was thus the sight of a constant battle between different versions of what constituted Dutch identity and, in the ensuing struggle, new myths emerged.

It is useful to approach this question via a comparison with the American frontier. The historian of early colonial South Africa is not blessed, as is the historian of early colonial America, with a great variety of non-official written sources in which to trace the development of a distinctive frontier mythology. There is no seventeenth or eighteenth century South African colonial literature. No novels or poetry, few private letters and even fewer private diaries were produced by Dutch colonists at the Cape. There were no newspapers in South Africa prior to the first British occupation and no tradition of private printing. New England, by contrast, possessed its own printing press as early as the 1670s and a constant flow of broadsheets, newspapers, sermons, histories, narratives, novels and poems were produced and circulated within the English colonies. A great deal of this literature was concerned with the nature of the relationship between the colonists and the Indians. It was also concerned with the creation of a distinctive American identity, aware that the expansion of the colony was creating a new class of frontiersman, closer, perhaps, to the Indian than to the Englishman. Whilst the early Puritan settlers of New England had regarded the Indians as the demonic personification of the American wilderness the great paradox of American history was that, if one wished to tame this wilderness, one had to become, like the Indian, savage oneself. According to Slotkin, by the middle of the nineteenth century, American frontier literature had come to recognise a central theme that it would enshrine in various mythic narratives which informed subsequent American history. The theme was basically that of regeneration through violence: that the civilised, in order to tame the wilderness and defeat the savage Indian, must themselves become wild and savage, and by doing so they would be spiritually regenerated.²⁶ The life of Daniel Boone, first recorded as a written narrative in 1784, quickly assumed mythic proportions thanks to its ability to encapsulate "all the significant strands of thought and belief about the frontier that had been developed in the historical experience of the colonies, concentrate those experiences in the tale of a single hero, and present that hero's career in such a way that his audience could believe in and identify with him".²⁷ Naturally violence and regeneration featured strongly in the Boone story - just as it had in pre-Boone frontier literature and just as it would in post-Boone literature. But it was Boone who became the archetypal American frontier hero because his story (as told by John Filson) was the story of the frontier.

26. This is the argument of Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*.

27. Slotkin, p.269.

This is not the appropriate place to indulge in further analysis of the life story of Daniel Boone. His story does, however, raise important questions for South African historians and not only because, as in America, violence was also pervasive on the South African frontier. If the Cape colonial frontier lacks the literary dimension of the American frontier how are we to identify or discover its frontier mythology? Slotkin can write of American frontiersmen that: "Their concerns, their hopes, their terrors, their violence, and their justification of themselves, as expressed in literature, are the foundation stones of the mythology that informs our history."²⁸ But in what forms did Cape frontiersmen and women lay down the foundations of a frontier mythology? We have, perforce, to look at the stories contained in the sources already cited in this preface. In doing so, however, we should remember that, like all narratives, "True myths are generated on a sub-literary level by the historical experience of a people and thus constitute part of that inner reality which the work of artists draws on, illuminates and explains".²⁹ It is through the lives that they lived that people reveal their stories. It is the historian's task to reconfigure those lives and, by so doing, attempt to explicate their stories.

Historical events possess a narrative structure. This is the argument of Paul Ricoeur and it is one with which I am in agreement. The thesis that follows is presented in the form of a narrative and it will be important, at the outset, to justify this seemingly unscientific or "romantic" approach. I have deliberately indulged in telling stories, whereas to many getting the "story" out of history might seem the first step in the transformation of historical studies into a science. These stories have also, for the most part, been presented chronologically. Since it is possible to contest the adequacy of even such a basic structure of emplotment - of beginning, middle and end - as a representation of the reality of temporality, some introductory remarks will be necessary.

One way of viewing historical narrative is as a type of story structure imposed on the chaos of reality by a historian as an ordering device but no more "true" than any other representation of the world and no more authoritative than myth or fiction. This viewpoint, associated with the influential writings of Hayden White, is difficult to refute and is certainly not answered by the claim that life imitates art or that the real world really does assume the form of a well made story.³⁰ This is not, as it happens, what Ricoeur means when he argues that historical events have a narrative structure. Narrativity is neither imposed on events nor inherent in them. Rather,

28. Ibid., p.4.

29. Ibid.

30. For Hayden White's thoughts on the subject of narrative discourse and historical representation see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, 1987). See also his *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth - Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973) and *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore, 4th edition, 1990).

narrativity is the way in which temporality is apprehended by human consciousness. The enigma of being-in-time is comprehended narrativistically, not because time is narrativistic but because there is no other way for humans to understand time. This is because, for Ricoeur, time is aporetic:

Speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity can alone respond. Not that this activity solves the aporias through substitution. If it does resolve them, it is in a poetical and not a theoretical sense of the word. Emplotment ... replies to the speculative aporia with a poetic making of something capable, certainly, of clarifying the aporia ... but not of resolving it theoretically.³¹

Narrative emplotment helps to clarify the aporias of time because, mimetically, it reflects our phenomenological experience of time as being, simultaneously, before, present, and after. Narrative is a way of dealing with the human sense of the duration of time.

Thus far, it may be argued, Ricoeur has not succeeded in distancing himself sufficiently from those who claim that narrativity is imposed on events and that historical narrative is simply a species of chronology. But what makes historical discourse different from mere chronicle is that the sequence of events has been plotted into a story and thereby instilled with meaning, not just arranged in chronological order. Unlike fiction, however, the events are real rather than imaginary. As Hayden White puts it, for Ricoeur: "Historical discourse is a privileged instantiation of the human capacity to endow the experience of time with meaning because the immediate referent (the *Bedeutung*) of this discourse is real, rather than imaginary, events."³² The belief that historical events actually happened separates Ricoeur from those who believe that history can be no more than a deconstruction of various texts about the past and who can argue that: "In Auschwitz, however, nothing real has happened; there is only what is said about it."³³ Historical events did take place and were created by people whose own lives had the coherency of emplotted stories and whose actions were shaped by a narrative intention.

This latter point, that lives are like narratives, needs elaboration. For Ricoeur: "A life is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it has not been interpreted."³⁴ But humans do interpret their lives, being possessed of the ability to discriminate between action and mere physical

31. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, p.6.

32. Hayden White, "The Metaphysics of Narrativity: Time and Symbol in Ricoeur's Philosophy of History", in *The Content of the Form*, p.173.

33. A statement made by Robert Faurisson and discussed by Ricoeur in "Discussion: Ricoeur on Narrative", in David Wood, (ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London, 1991), p.186.

34. Paul Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative", in D. Wood, (ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur*, pp.27-28.

movement, understanding what is signified by "project, means, circumstances, and so on".³⁵ Humans are also aware of the symbolic meaning of their actions. The inherited cultural traditions of a society enable actions to be read against the signs, rules and norms of that society. There is a context of description in which human action occurs and which gives it its significance.³⁶ There is also a third way of comprehending actions, distinct from familiarity with both the conceptual network of actions and their symbolic meaning. This third way is our knowledge that our lives are lived like stories we have heard and seem to need narration for their meaning to emerge. We are born into a world that is already full of our predecessors' narratives. Thus it is that Ricoeur speaks of life as "an activity and passion in search of a narrative" and asks whether we are not "inclined to see in our own life something like stories that have not yet been told, stories that offer points of anchorage for the narrative".³⁷ Individuals gain self-knowledge by recounting their lives and we can understand past actors not only by recognising the stories which they have made of their lives but also by emplotting their stories for them.³⁸ It is not wrong for historians to see more than past agents did when emplotting their actions, nor to use the advantage of hindsight and techniques of analysis developed by modern social sciences. Indeed, it is the historian's duty to do so. As Hayden White explains:

The creation of a historical narrative, then, is an action exactly like that by which historical events are created, but in the domain of "wording" rather than that of "working". By discovering the plots "prefigured" in historical actions by the agents that produced them and "configuring" them as sequences of events having the coherency of stories with a beginning, middle and end, historians make explicit the meaning implicit in historical events themselves.³⁹

Such an approach puts the emphasis in history back onto human agency and away from the type of history proposed by the Annales school with its stress on impersonal, anonymous forces.⁴⁰ It has been warmly embraced by philosophers like David Carr who has argued that it does not do to make too much of a distinction between "reality" and human reality.⁴¹ In these circumstances narration should not be seen as a distortion, denial or escape from "reality" but as an extension,

35. Ibid., p.28.

36. When one engages in a reading, or interpretation, of an event that is sensitive to the cultural context of the event, one is engaging in what Clifford Geertz refers to as "thick description". See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Princeton, 1973), pp.3-30.

37. Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative", p.29 and *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp.74-75.

38. This is a point which David Carr develops in his article "Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity", in *History and Theory*, 25, 1986, pp.117-131.

39. Hayden White, "The Metaphysics of Narrativity", p.174.

40. Ricoeur criticises Braudel and the Annales school in *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp.101-111.

41. David Carr, "Discussion", in D. Wood, (ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur*, pp.160-174.

enrichment and conformation of its primary features. As such, history is a human creation, shaped and comprehended in the temporality of narrative by people who present their own lives as stories for others to read. The fact that life often lacks the same formal coherence of a story is simply to admit that the individual does not have the same sort of control over his or her material as an author does. It does not mean that the individual does not strive to interpret himself, or be interpreted, within meaningful narrative structures, shaped by past models, present circumstances and expectations of the judgement of posterity. It is precisely in this attempt to configure events that humanity comes to grips with the experience of temporality and, in the process, aspires towards a redemption from history itself.

This extremely sketchy summary of Ricoeur's work on time and narrative is not intended to do justice to the complexity of his thought and has come nowhere close to conveying the brilliant illuminations contained within his extensive meditations upon temporality. The purpose behind introducing some basic Ricoeurian concepts in this preface is to demonstrate that historical narrative has a philosophical respectability and that some understanding of the relationship between narrative and life is essential to an understanding of both history and the writing of history. Narrative is, in fact, returning to favour amongst both philosophers of history and historians themselves.⁴² In the pages which follow I have tried to produce a historical narrative which encompasses a wide area of time and space, using the structuring devices of narrative (chronology and the emplotment of events into a story) in order to highlight certain themes and interpret the meaning of certain events. This is, doubtless, an imposition on the past. I hope, however, that it will be clear that I have not unduly imposed a narrative structure on events but attempted to allow the stories of the historical agents themselves to emerge from the sources and records consulted. "We tell stories," says Ricoeur, "because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated."⁴³ The historian is not the first, however, to narrate the lives of the dead. Whilst they lived they narrated their own lives and, after death, some of their story may have been emplotted in the records, however partial or inadequate, which survived them. The voices of the dead have thus already passed through the imperfect medium of historical sources before experiencing a reconfigured resonance through the medium of the historian. These multiple distortions are, of course, inevitable and part of the fabric of history, for the historian can only

42. For a recent example of a narrative history written in the spirit of Ricoeur as interpreted by David Carr see Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle Of The French Revolution* (London, 1989). For examples of other developments in narrative history see Peter Burke, "The History of Events and the Revival of Narrative", in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.233-248 and L. Stone, "The Revival of Narrative", *Past and Present*, 85, 1979, pp.3-24.

43. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, p.75.

attempt to salvage scraps of the past from the experience of temporality. In presenting these scraps it may be that I have erred by including too much in the way of detail. If this is so, I remain unapologetic for, in the words of the greatest writer of the twentieth century, "In art as in science there is no delight without the detail".⁴⁴

44. Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York, 1973), p. 10.

Part I

The Advance of the Colonial Frontier, 1700-c.1740

For many farmers of the interior, the monthly struggle to meet the demands of a voracious Company for meat, grain, fruit, and vegetables for its East Indiamen, provisions which had to be carried to the Cape by ox-wagon over poor roads, had become too much. Such men turned their eyes to the naked plains of the interior, seeing themselves lords of their own lives. Stand at the very tip of the Cape and stare out to sea.

What do you think of? The South: black seas, ice, whiteness. Leave the Cape, on horseback perhaps, and for miles you are still escaping the South. Then, click, at a distance from the coast variously specified you are free of the South. You enter a treacherous neutral zone free of the feeling of destiny. Then as you move further north, click, you are in a second zone of destiny, bound to the North. There is nothing but North.

J.M. Coetzee
Dusklands

An Introduction

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The best way to approach the northern Cape frontier zone is via an understanding of the significance of the frontier in South African history. The only way to do this, however, is to come to terms with the concept of the frontier itself, a concept "umbilically attached to Frederick Jackson Turner, a historian half a century dead, whose theories have been savaged and repudiated", and who is yet, according to Robert I. Burns, "a kind of vampire, killed on many a day with a stake through his Thesis, yet ever undead and stalking abroad".¹ What is the ghastly reality behind this horrible vision?

In 1893 the American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, delivered a paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" to the American Historical Association in Chicago.² It quickly became one of the most influential papers in history. The Turner thesis was, basically, that the American frontier had given both Americans and American history their distinctive character. The frontier, for Turner, was not simply a place but also a condition or a process where the "unsettled" became the "settled" (land with less than two Europeans per square mile was Turner's definition of unsettled) by the physical movement of settlers onto the land. Since it was "a meeting place between savagery and civilisation" the frontier was a region of continuous transformation, whereby some protagonists became more savage whilst others became more civil. Ultimately, however, American institutions and the American personality emerged from this evolutionary process. "The frontier is the line of most rapid Americanization" and "the typical American region".³ Democracy, individualism, self-reliance and nationalism were the fruits of the frontier.

Whilst the above account may seem a simplistic travesty of a complex argument it has to be stated that part of Turner's appeal lay precisely in the ability of others to extract their own

1. Robert I. Burns, "The Significance of the Frontier in the Middle Ages", in Robert Bartlett and Angus Mackay (eds.), *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1992), p.307.

2. The paper is included in Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, reprint 1962), pp.1-38.

3. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier", pp.3, 4 and 28.

meaning from the tangle of his ideas.⁴ As Burns has noted: "When Turner's thinking did become clear, it was not very useful; when useful, it was not very clear".⁵ Although Turner's thesis was specifically erected on the example of American history, non-American historians were quick to apply its precepts to the frontiers of other European colonies. One of the first to do so in South Africa was Leo Fouché who, in 1909, delivered a lecture which might have been entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in South African History" but which was, in fact, more modestly presented as "Die Evolutie van die Trekboer".⁶ In this lecture Fouché - who became known as the Frederick Jackson Turner of South Africa for his pains⁷ - focused on the first fifty years of the Dutch colony at the Cape, during which time there emerged a class of livestock farming, wandering freeburghers - the *trekboers*. He presented them as the key to unlocking the character of South African history. He stressed how Company oppression, a limited market, labour shortages, land hunger, agricultural difficulties and the relative ease of acquiring Khoikhoi cattle had virtually forced the *trekboers* into existence. As early as the end of the seventeenth century these *trekboers* were already the spiritual fathers of the Voortrekkers, ready to achieve their historical mission, "om S. Afrika 'n witmensland te maak".⁸ Their peculiar character, marked by a passionate love of freedom, was about to blossom - as blossom it did in Fouché's racist panegyric:

die trekboer, - die man wat verreweg die grootse rol gespeel het in die uitbreiding van 'n blanke Suidafrika. Die trekboer is die, wat altyd die voorpost was van die blanke leger. Hij het dag en nag, jaar na jaar, ja - eeuw na eeuw geworstel met berg en bos, met wilde diere en nog wilder mense - om die land schoon te maak v'r die witman wat achterna kom. Een vir een moes Hottentot en Boesman en Bantu vir hom wijk - totdat die land van Tafelberg tot aan die Krokodil skoon geveeg het. Die trekboer het die hele Kaapkolonie langsaam maar seker v'r die witman ontgin. Die trekboer was dit ook wat die groote Trek voorberei het, en moelik gemaak het.⁹

Such views were easily absorbed within the mainstream of Afrikaner historiography, preoccupied as it was with the search for Afrikaner identity and the belief that this identity had emerged

4. Slotkin's idea of regeneration through violence, discussed in the preface, is a good example of the way in which Turner's thesis, with its emphasis on the centrality of the frontier experience in the formation of American character and history, has been used by a recent scholar.

5. Burns, "Significance of the Frontier", pp.308-309.

6. Leo Fouché, "Die Evolutie Van Die Trekboer". Lesing gehou voor die Christelike Jongelieden Vereniging, Pretoria, 22 November 1909. 11 pp.

7. He was called this by H.M. Robertson. See Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Cape Town, 1988), p.114.

8. Fouché, "Evolutie", p.1.

9. Ibid., p.11.

through struggle. One of the few virtues of Fouché's lecture was to have drawn attention to the fact that the frontier thesis in South Africa was something that could be back-dated to the end of the seventeenth century and did not necessarily begin with the conflict between colonists and Xhosa on the eastern frontier or the Great Trek. This insight was rather lost on the majority of historians who were happy to remove Turner's ideas from Fouché's custody and apply them to, what seemed to them, the more significant drama of the Great Trek. The epic story of Voortrekker expansion henceforth received the theoretical boost of the Turner thesis and an enhanced mytho-poetic status. For the time being, the rather obscure early eighteenth century frontier of *trekboer* expansion was forgotten.

A further adaptation of the frontier thesis occurred when English speaking liberal historians realised that Fouché's vision of the frontier's significance, when grafted onto the Great Trek, tended to valorise the white racism of modern South Africa. W.M. Macmillan was first to draw attention to the fundamentally illiberal nature of both the frontier and the Great Trek but it was Eric Walker, in 1930, who attempted, far more profoundly than Fouché, to apply Turner's thesis to the South African frontier. The result was highly original.¹⁰ What Walker did, explains Christopher Saunders, was to turn Turner on his head:

whereas Turner argued that America owed its democracy to the frontier, Walker asserted that South Africa owed its racism to the frontier. In each case the frontier had bred what was seen to be most distinctive about the particular country, but while the frontier in America was responsible for what was best in American life, in South Africa it had created misery and conflict. So the trekboers and the trekkers were at the same time both those who had set out to "blaze a trail for civilisation far into the interior of Africa", and the source of South Africa's current problems, because of the archaic racist ideas, forged on the Cape frontier, which they had carried with them.¹¹

Walker's critique, however, did not contest the central importance of the Great Trek - nor the perception that the eastern frontier, and not the northern, had been the real birth place of the frontier tradition. Thus Walker could write that Governor Van Plettenberg's trip to the eastern frontier in 1778 marked:

the beginning of a most significant period in South African history, sixty years or so, say two generations, during which the frontier tradition was fully formed. At the end of it the trekkers of the Great Trek carried that tradition with them into the

10. Eric Walker, *The Frontier Tradition in South Africa* (Oxford, 1930).

11. Saunders, *South African Past*, p.115.

wilderness. All that had gone before led up to that; most of what has happened since has been a commentary upon it.¹²

However much Walker had altered the frontier thesis to meet South African requirements he still retained a typically Turneresque concept of a frontier - that it was something primarily affecting whites, and that it tended to exclude, rather than include or incorporate, those on the wrong side of the frontier. He did not see, as did subsequent liberal historians, that the frontier was also a place, or process, whereby both black and white became involved in a complex series of social, political and economic interactions that were not always antagonistic or military in character. Such advances lay in the future. Before surveying the further evolution of the frontier thesis in liberal historiography it would be advisable to consider the case of a most singular historian who stands out in the sparsely populated historiographical terrain of the northern frontier zone as a great pioneer.

P.J. van der Merwe's work is, in some respects, like the northern Cape frontier zone itself - expansive, important and neglected. During the course of the late 1930s and early 1940s he produced a series of thematically connected books which, though published separately, were conceived of as a tripartite whole - a "pioniersgeskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie".¹³ His principal interest was in the *trekboers* of the period before the Great Trek. By *trekboers* he meant "die half-nomadiese grensboere wat die natuurlike uitbreiding van die Kolonie na die binneland gelei het".¹⁴ Both in the use of the word "natuurlike" (natural) and in his vision of *trekboer* expansion as a prelude to the Great Trek, Van der Merwe revealed certain characteristic assumptions: the epic theme of South African history was the subjugation of the African wilderness by a people who would become known as Afrikaners and, at the heart of this myth (not a word he would have used himself), was the Great Trek. The real Voortrekkers, however, were those who had been trekkers even before the Great Trek, that is, the *trekboers*. Though the expansion of these pioneers was "natural" (or inevitable) it was not easy. Sometimes, indeed, it was tragic. But it was in triumphing over tragedy and natural hardship that a distinctive nation arose - the Afrikaner.

12. Walker, *Frontier Tradition*, p.12.

13. The three books in question are *Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek 1770-1842* (The Hague, 1937); *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie, 1657-1842* (Cape Town, 1938) and *Trek: Studies oor die Mobiliteit van die Pioniersbevolking aan die Kaap* (Cape Town, 1945).

14. P.J. van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, p.ix.

It is clear from a reading of Van der Merwe's work that he had found Fouché's lecture of 1909 highly stimulating and that he had determined to replace that eleven page sketch with a major study of his own. Though Van der Merwe tended to avoid making any direct theoretical or historiographical statements he quietly borrowed Fouché's interpretation of Turner and applied this version of the frontier thesis to his own work. He also eschewed direct political commentary, but his political ideas were all too conventional and what one would expect of a Stellenbosch graduate of his day. What really set him apart from his colleagues, however, was a concern for social, economic and, above all, environmental issues, that was, in some respects, well ahead of his time. He was thoroughly convinced that the *trekboers* could only be understood through a deep knowledge of the natural environment of the Cape interior and his research in this respect is unequalled. In his pursuit of environmental knowledge, he travelled an estimated 24 000 kilometres in his car, getting to know the landscape and interviewing hundreds of farmers.¹⁵ This grass-roots research was complemented by a similarly careful and thorough use of archival material. The end product of his labours was an impressively detailed account of the life of the *trekboers*, stressing the ways in which they adapted to a harsh natural environment where drought, locusts and *trekbokke* played as great a role as the Bushmen (San) in testing endurance.

The San are indeed a major presence in Van der Merwe's work and, to his credit, he does not simply treat them as another natural phenomenon to be overcome. A large part of *Noordwaartse Beweging* is about the long struggle which took place between *trekboer* and San, especially after 1770, on the colony's northern frontier. Although Van der Merwe's primary concern is with the *trekboers* his documentation of this protracted frontier war did serve to remind readers that San resistance was far from negligible and that the eastern frontier was not the only crucible of conflict in Cape history. True, he sometimes treats San attacks on *trekboer* cattle as being a hunting reflex rather than a tactic of resistance, but his pages are full of sympathy for the plight of the San and he does not hesitate to document instances of *trekboer* cruelty. It was a harsh environment and in the struggle for survival the strongest, naturally, prevailed.

The Khoikhoi, by contrast, are largely absent from Van der Merwe's history. Their relationship with the San is not discussed, nor are they assumed to have offered any significant resistance, or assistance, to the *trekboers*. There is very little about their incorporation into the *trekboer* economy and no discussion concerning their social, economic or political status. Their story, for all intents and purposes, is regarded as having been subsumed by that of the *trekboers* and the

15. See Ken Smith's account of Van der Merwe in *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing* (Johannesburg, 1988), pp.76-80.

process of colonial expansion prior to 1770 is depicted as having been achieved against the background of negligible Khoikhoi presence.

The "Bastaards" of the frontier zone are equally unimportant in Van der Merwe's account and it is only after 1825, when the Griquas become a political factor, that they are treated as being in any way significant. The origins and status of these people are not amongst Van der Merwe's themes; nor does he seek to explore the similarities or differences between "Bastaard" and "Boer". For Van der Merwe the frontier was thus primarily a place of conflict between the primitive San and the *trekboers*. He did not see it as a zone of intercultural contact but rather as an area where the wilderness was won for white settlement and the *trekboers* adapted to the challenges of the environment. In this respect he showed himself to be, consciously or not, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner.¹⁶

Even though this version of history was highly acceptable to Afrikaner nationalists, who particularly appreciated that the deeds of ordinary *trekboers* should receive such detailed consideration, Van der Merwe's influence was not as great as his labours merited. The fact that his work was published in Afrikaans may account for the lack of appreciation shown by English speaking historians but his marginal status amongst Afrikaners is harder to explain. Whilst it was readily acknowledged that he was a master of meticulous research and an authority on footnoting his work did not lead to a resurgence of interest in the northern frontier of the eighteenth century. It is possible that his massive trilogy became a stumbling-block, rather than a spring-board to further research, and that the weight of details stifled, rather than kindled academic debate.¹⁷ Ultimately, the majority of historians became convinced that the activities of obscure *trekboers* and their soon to be extinct "Bushmen" foes in the arid wastes of the Karoo, were not central to an understanding of South African history. Researchers continued to believe that the great themes involved "Bantu, Boer and Briton" and that the best place to observe them was either on the eastern frontier or the highveld or, alternatively, in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The eighteenth century northern frontier sank back into the sands of time and the *trekboer* trilogy gathered dust on the shelves.¹⁸

16. Van der Merwe does not list Turner in his bibliographies although Turner is cited on p.58 of *Noordwaartse Beweging*.

17. Significantly Van der Merwe himself produced no major work after his thirty-fifth birthday. Ken Smith, *Changing Past*, p.76.

18. It is only very recently that there has been a reprint of *Noordwaartse Beweging*.

Although the mainstream of historical research moved elsewhere, developments within South African historiography were helping to create a climate which would, in time, lead to a return to the northern Cape frontier. The work of W.M. Macmillan and his protégé C.W. de Kiewiet in the 1920s and 1930s reflected the growing awareness that the influence of the frontier in South African history was not only strong and malign but complex in ways that Fouché and Walker had not appreciated. It was on the frontier that Africans had been incorporated into European society, incorporated not as equals but as subservient labourers. Sometimes this incorporation looked a lot like exclusion, as Africans were forced to remain in reserves from which they could only emerge as migrant labourers when and if required. Liberal historians were realising, however, that whatever the exact status of Africans, it was on the frontier that they were incorporated into the unitary economic system that became South Africa. The penetrating insight and sweeping vision of Macmillan and De Kiewiet did not dispose them to write detailed studies of the frontier. They far preferred bold syntheses to case studies although De Kiewiet had, in fact, completed an Honours dissertation: "Government, Emigrants, Missionaries and Natives on the Northern Frontier 1832-1846" in 1924. Sadly, no copies of this survive, one having been destroyed in the fire in the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1931.¹⁹ We do not know, therefore, the extent to which De Kiewiet's ideas were influenced by his knowledge of early nineteenth century frontier history but we can assume that his sensitivity to the complexity of frontier processes owed something to his early studies.

The northern frontier next came under historical scrutiny in J.S. Marais' 1938 book, *The Cape Coloured People 1652-1937*.²⁰ This book, as its title suggests, had as its subject the history of the Cape Coloured people. It was influenced by an earlier work of Macmillan's, *The Cape Colour Question* (1927)²¹ which had been concerned with John Philip's struggle to win equality for the Khoikhoi by championing the passing of Ordinance 50 in 1828. Marais sought to write a more wide ranging book whose purpose was to show how closely intertwined were the histories of Europeans and Coloureds. His rapid survey of the disintegration of Khoikhoi societies stressed the injustices which accompanied their absorption within colonial society though it tended to minimise the resistance that was offered to this process. Miscegenation between Europeans and Khoikhoi was dealt with frankly but briefly since Marais was more concerned with documenting the discriminatory actions from which Coloureds suffered than in dwelling on their origins. His book was a plea for justice and a condemnation of racism. The central period of time covered by

19. Saunders, *South African Past*, pp.76-77.

20. J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People 1652-1937* (Johannesburg, 1938).

21. W.M. Macmillan, *The Cape Colour Question* (London, 1927)

the book was the nineteenth century, particularly the years before and after Ordinance 50, but there were important chapters on the northern and north-western Cape frontier that contributed greatly towards an understanding of the history of these regions. Marais noted that the north-western Cape was "the cradle of the Bastard population" and paid considerable attention to the Griquas whom he called "the Voortrekkers of civilisation on the northern frontier".²² By asserting that the Griquas "were in fact typical frontiersmen, more so than many of the Boers themselves, whom they nevertheless resembled in many ways", Marais was helping to blur some of the cherished distinctions of the frontier thesis. He noted elsewhere that "Bastard communities were essentially frontier societies which suffered from the additional disadvantage of being Coloured", implying that the frontier was not the most desirable place to be and that, on the very margins of the frontier, one was likely to find those who suffered from racial persecution.²³ Certainly, after Marais work, it was clear that the northern Cape frontier regions (the least desirable in South Africa) had been pioneered by non-white colonial frontiersmen largely because racial discrimination had forced them there. The challenge to historians was now to investigate, in greater detail, the origins of this racial discrimination and to decide the extent to which the frontier experience itself had contributed to racist perceptions.

Marais decided that a detailed study of the eastern frontier was necessary and his next book, *Maynier and the First Boer Republic*, dealt with that district between the years 1778-1802. His intention was to rescue the reputation of *Landdrost* Maynier from the vilification of Theal. Maynier had attempted to keep the peace between frontier colonists, the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa during a particularly disturbed time and, in Theal's opinion, had been guilty of an unfair, anti-colonial bias. Marais wished to demonstrate, by a detailed use of documentary evidence, that Theal was wrong and had himself been motivated by a wish to "tilt the balance in favour of the European colonists and against the non-Europeans as well as those Europeans who, like Maynier, were critical of the colonists' point of view and behaviour".²⁴ It might seem as though Marais' intention was to portray Maynier as a liberal hero, even though he disclaims such an intention and insists that the frontier is the real hero of the story. He did indeed succeed in presenting a richly detailed account of a fascinating frontier where human interactions were seen to be shaped by highly personal, local perceptions and not necessarily stereotypical racial

22. Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, pp.12 and 43.

23. *Ibid.*, p.107.

24. J.S. Marais, *Maynier and the First Boer Republic* (Cape Town, 1944), p.vi. Interestingly, P.J. van der Merwe had also decided to write on the eastern frontier. Marais found his book, *Die Kafferoorlog van 1793* (Cape Town, 1940) to be in agreement with Theal's interpretation of events.

responses. He also proved beyond all doubt that the frontier colonists treated their Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" servants barbarously. Although the reason for this was uncertain, Maynier did provide a clue which would form the basis of future research into this question. "It was," he said, "after all not unnatural that the Boer should have the slave owner's mentality."²⁵

For the moment, however, it was not the connection between racism and slavery that interested historians but that which existed between racism and the frontier. Given the influence of Turner and Walker it was taken for granted that the frontier had contributed towards the creation of South African racism. The man who set out to make the connection more explicit was I.D. MacCrone, not an historian, but a psychology professor at the University of the Witwatersrand. His book, *Race Attitudes in South Africa*, appeared just before Marais' *Cape Coloured People* and contained a survey of race relations on the seventeenth and eighteenth century Cape frontier.²⁶ MacCrone's starting point was to stress that, initially, the most important factor influencing colonial perceptions of non-whites was a religious one, and that the dichotomy between Christians and heathens was regarded as being more fundamental than that between black and white. The possibility therefore existed that blacks who became Christians would be accepted as equals within colonial society. What happened, however, was that in the process of frontier expansion racial prejudice became stronger than religious sensibilities and the fundamental dichotomy was now seen as being between white and non-white. Why this happened, according to MacCrone, was that the constant insecurity of the frontier encouraged a greater sense of group-consciousness. Birds of a feather flocked together. Since non-whites were usually hostile the colonists had to unite (typically in commando units) in order to protect themselves and in so doing fostered a sense of self identity that was essentially racial.

MacCrone's ideas were basically a better detailed, psychologically more plausible, version of the Turner-Walker frontier thesis. He did not attempt to demonstrate how race attitudes acquired on the eighteenth century frontier manifested themselves in contemporary society beyond the assertion that "the attitudes themselves, as they existed towards the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, are very similar to those which we find displayed on all sides at the present time."²⁷ These ideas were to suffer savage attack at a later date for having failed to consider that there might have been areas or processes other than Calvinism or the frontier which influenced the development of racial attitudes.²⁸ His work also failed to reflect the

25. Marais, *Maynier*, p.73.

26. I.D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1937).

27. *Ibid.*, pp.135-6

28. See p.14 below.

growing awareness of liberal historians that it was important to describe developments on the other side of the frontier and to demonstrate the complexity of social, political and economic interactions effecting African society. This does not mean that MacCrone's insights were all incorrect for they anticipate present theories about the creation of ethnic or national identity. Peter Sahlins, for instance, has written that national identity "like ethnic or communal identity, is contingent and relational: it is defined by the social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation of the other".²⁹ As we shall see, the frontier was as much a creator of new identities as it was a destroyer of old ones.

After MacCrone it was a long time before any part of the frontier, or the frontier thesis, was revisited by South African historians. This was partly due to the success of the frontier thesis as an explanation and partly due to the fact that frontier research seemed a low priority during the 1950s and 1960s. The liberal view of the frontier thesis was that it was useful. It explained that racism was an eighteenth century anachronism which would disappear in the process of pursuing rational economic development. What was the point in studying the frontier when its message was already learnt? In any event, the real challenge of the time was to write Africanist history about African societies. It is beyond the scope of this brief survey to recount or analyse the various stages by which liberal historians became liberal Africanist historians. Nor is it appropriate to describe how, in the gestation period of the 1960s, there occurred the growth of a radical or revisionist critique of both liberalism and Africanism.³⁰ For the purposes of this enquiry we need only concern ourselves with those developments which have a direct relevance to an understanding of the South African frontier in general and the northern Cape frontier in particular. As it happens, all of these issues came to a head in 1970 with the presentation of a paradigm smashing seminar paper at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London. The paper was entitled "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography" and its author was Martin Legassick.³¹

Legassick's paper was inspired by a predominantly Marxist view of history (the influence of Genovese was apparent) and became an important manifesto for a new, radical or revisionist approach to the South African past. Part of the paper's influence was due to the fact that Legassick sought to destroy the cornerstone of the work of some of South Africa's most respected

29. Quoted by Linda Colley in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1994), pp.5-6.

30. These topics are well handled by Christopher Saunders in parts 4 and 5 of his *South African Past*.

31. The paper was subsequently published in Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, (eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980).

and influential historians. This cornerstone was the frontier tradition and Legassick showed how it had been used by liberal historians to support rather shaky ideas about the origins and significance of race attitudes in South Africa. For a start, Legassick argued, quoting Genovese, that race could not be divorced from class since "race relations are at bottom a class question into which 'the race question intrudes and gives ... a special force and form but does not constitute its essence'".³² South African historians had not applied the "complexity and subtlety" of such a class analysis to the problem of racism and tended to think that "by and large, slavery, Calvinism, and the frontier between them suffice to 'explain' present day race attitudes in South Africa".³³ The evidence from the frontier, however, was not as clear cut as might be supposed.

There was, Legassick argued, a great deal of confusion surrounding the significance of the frontier in South African history. Confusion which had arisen from the initial acceptance of Turner's unsatisfactory concept of a frontier as an area of isolation from the parent society. Rather, a frontier was more correctly an area of contact and inclusion between two societies. This error in perception had occurred because the American and South African frontiers were so different. The American frontier was one of exclusion and near extermination of the Indian whereas the South African frontier was one of inclusion as well as exclusion. Where South African historians such as MacCrone had grasped the dual nature of the frontier it was usually only in so far as it effected the European society involved. Thus it was possible for MacCrone to regard *trekboers* as having been re-barbarised (by the isolationist, exclusionist aspects of the frontier) and Afrikanerised (by that which they absorbed from the frontier environment) simultaneously.³⁴ The real point, however, was not simply to consider the effects of frontier exclusion or inclusion on white society but to consider how all societies in the frontier zone were effected. Historians like Macmillan and De Kiewiet, Legassick conceded, had recognised that the frontier was the stage where men of opposite races were doing more than quarrel with each other.

32. Legassick, "Frontier Tradition", p.51.

33. Ibid., p.52. Legassick was in fact overestimating the attention which had been paid to slavery.

34. Confusions can and do arise at this point in Legassick's paper and some of them are of Legassick's making. Marks and Atmore castigate the luckless Harrison Wright for having misunderstood Legassick but it is not entirely Wright's fault. (See the editorial notes in Marks and Atmore, *Economy and Society*, pp.44, 49, 53, 59, and 61). Legassick has failed to clarify that MacCrone did not perceive that "exclusion" means more than simply the isolation of a fragment of the parent society and its subsequent barbarisation. It also means the rejection of the other society's culture by a society which fiercely protects and perpetuates its own culture. MacCrone, in effect, attributed the effects of inclusion to those of exclusion. This failure to make a clear distinction between inclusion and exclusion clearly encouraged Leonard Guelke to write an article on the dual nature of the South African frontier as though no one had ever noticed this phenomenon before. See L. Guelke, "The Making of Two Frontier Communities: Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century", *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historique*, xii, 1985. The exclusion/inclusion model comes from the geographer Marvin Mikesell and his article "Comparative Studies in Frontier History", *Annals of the American Society of Geographers*, 50, 1960, pp.62-74.

De Kiewiet had written that: "Even though they did not know it they were engaged in the formation of a new society and the establishment of new economic and social bonds".³⁵ *The Oxford History of South Africa*, published in 1969, had also shown an awareness that the frontier was a place where different races co-operated or conflicted with each other with repercussions for all the societies involved - not just colonial society.³⁶ But Legassick still believed that liberals were guilty of assuming that non-whites, typically, entered this new society as servants and that they did so because of the racist violence inflicted on them by white frontiersmen who had been predisposed to view non-whites as enemies by the conflictual nature of the frontier zone.³⁷

Whilst Legassick did not question that much violence and brutality had occurred on the frontier he questioned the assumption that this was specific to the frontier. A great deal of the violence directed against the Khoikhoi, he argued, arose from the fact that the colonists treated them as slaves and occurred within the colony rather than on the frontier. "In other respects, particularly the question of physical violence and assault, it would be hard to determine whether the frontier areas were in fact more violent than the western Cape rural areas."³⁸ This violence was not necessarily born of racism for whilst "White frontiersmen expected all their dependants (save their families) to be non-white: they did not expect all non-whites to be their servants".³⁹ Legassick argued that the race attitudes of the colonists were far more likely to have been brought with them from Europe or, alternatively, developed in the south-western Cape, than to have evolved on the frontier. The frontier, indeed, offered many examples of inter-racial co-operation, where white and black engaged in trade or mutual support. It was also clear that the frontier provided much better opportunities for self-advancement to non-whites than did the more effectively colonised areas of the colony. MacCrone's idea that the frontier fostered white group-consciousness, particularly through the institution of the commando, was also untenable. *Trekboer* families were isolated and disunited whilst commandos frequently had many "Bastaard" or Khoikhoi members within them.⁴⁰

At the heart of Legassick's paper was the argument that it was not "the frontier, seen as a social system distinct and isolated from a parent society, which produced a new, or even intensified an

35. Quoted by Legassick, "Frontier Tradition", p.63.

36. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1969).

37. Legassick, "Frontier Tradition", p.63.

38. Ibid., p.67.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., pp.60-68.

old, pattern of racial relationships".⁴¹ Rather, it was the other way round. The Parent society produced the frontier. This perception, Legassick acknowledged, had come from Owen Lattimore. Just as Walker had turned Turner on his head in order to utilise his thesis, so had Lattimore turned Turner inside out in order to arrive at a better conception of the frontier:

frontiers are of social, not geographic origin. Only after the concept of a frontier exists can it be attached by the community that has conceived it to a geographical configuration. The consciousness of belonging to a group, a group that includes certain people and excludes others, must precede the conscious claim for that group of the right to live or move about within a particular territory... In large measure, when he [Turner] thought he saw what the frontier did to society, he was really seeing what society did to the frontier.⁴²

Lattimore was but one of many American scholars who had been subjecting the Turner thesis to a rigorous cross examination. Legassick, thanks to the years that he spent at the University of California, Los Angeles working under Leonard Thompson, had been exposed to a variety of neo-Turnerist debates and, consequently, had a far more sophisticated grasp of frontier concepts than other frontier historians. What had been happening in America was that Turner's view of the frontier as an area where wilderness was won for civilisation was being replaced by an approach which saw frontiers as zones of intercultural contact. Historians, anthropologists and other social scientists in the 1960s were stressing that frontier zones were "contact zones of cultures", where people of different cultures struggled with each other for control of resources and political power.⁴³ It was the idea of the frontier as a zone of cultural interaction that Legassick had applied and developed in the massive doctoral thesis on the northern Cape frontier zone which he had completed just before his seminal seminar paper of 1970. Research for this thesis had provided Legassick with much of the detailed knowledge and authority which so clearly lay behind his devastating attack on the frontier tradition. It is clearly important, therefore, to consider the thesis itself.

41. Ibid., p.67.

42. Quoted by Legassick, *ibid.*, p.68.

43. William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner", *Western Historical Quarterly*, 18, 1987. Quoted by Burns in "The Significance of the Frontier", p.310. See also David J. Weber, "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands", *American Historical Review*, 91, 1986, for a discussion of transformations of the Turner thesis. We should also mention Louis Hartz's, *The Founding of New Societies* (New York, 1964) which saw colonies and frontiers as being fragments of the original European societies. The book included a chapter by Leonard Thompson on South Africa and obviously had a great influence on Leonard Guelke.

Legassick's thesis, as the title indicated, focused mainly on the Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the missionaries of the northern frontier zone between the years 1780 and 1840.⁴⁴ Its geographical centre was, unsurprisingly, the area in which these different historical agents had interacted with each other during this period, i.e., the region north of the Orange River best described as Transorania. His themes examined the erosion of the political power of non-whites through absorption into plural communities in a subordinate political status and traced the "integration of the peoples of South Africa into a market economy linked ultimately with the industrialising capitalist economy of Europe".⁴⁵ Or, to put it another way, considered how the establishment of white supremacy had been achieved and what forms of acculturation had accompanied the creation of a "colonial situation". Some of the ideas discussed in the "Frontier Tradition" paper were already present in Legassick's introduction to the thesis, most notably the rejection of Turner's concept of a frontier and a re-examination of both the concept of the frontier and its significance in South African history. Legassick stressed that it made better sense to talk about a "frontier zone", a zone in which there was no single source of authority, in which "mutual acculturation" took place, and which was temporary, unstable, fluid and dynamic.

It is possible that Legassick had been drawn to the northern frontier zone in the first place because he thought it would supply him with the necessary evidence with which to smash the frontier thesis. Alternatively he may have been attracted to the northern frontier because of its neglect and only whilst pursuing his research discovered that race relations here seemed to be very different from the eastern frontier. Perhaps, as with most research, hypothesis and evidence grew together.

Through no fault of his own Legassick was unable to consult archival records within South Africa during the preparation of his thesis. The bulk of his primary research material was drawn from the records of the London Missionary Society in London and it is scarcely surprising that missionaries and their targets loom large in his account. Missionaries were seen as being vital catalysts of colonisation, promoting the processes of colonial dominance amongst the societies of the frontier zone in the interlinking spheres of social, political and economic life. Since missionary activity only began in the last years of the eighteenth century, Legassick's study was largely confined to the nineteenth century. He did, however, produce a brilliant survey of the

44. Martin Legassick, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries, 1780-1840: The Politics of a Frontier Zone" (Ph. D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1969).

45. *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

eighteenth century origins of the "Bastaards" (from whom the Griqua emerged) in the opening chapters of his thesis.

The Griquas were prime examples of frontier acculturation, having been born and bred in the frontier zone. Their history was the best possible case study through which to illustrate the twin themes of colonial subjugation and acculturation. Subjugation and acculturation were not only achieved by missionary influence but through warfare and trade - two sides of the same coin - activities in which the Griqua were very involved. As pioneers of the northern frontier zone the Griquas were amongst the first to transmit the disturbing influence of the colony to the Sotho-Tswana and Legassick was therefore concerned to describe Sotho-Tswana society in some detail. This aspect of his thesis probably owed a lot to the Africanist impulses of the day, and particularly, the influence of Leonard Thompson. Legassick's work on the Sotho-Tswana was a heroic pioneering effort and his thesis as a whole remains one of the most impressive, ambitious and wide ranging to have been written in the field of South African history. What was its impact and what effect did it have on the future studies of the northern frontier zone?

It has to be admitted that far more people have read Legassick's "Frontier Tradition" paper than have read his thesis. This is unfortunate because the strongest message of the paper was a call to abandon the frontier and search elsewhere for the historical origins of modern South African racial segregation. Scores of scholars heeded the call and trekked onwards to the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries so as to study the connection between the mineral revolution, industrialisation and apartheid. Others trekked backwards, away from the frontier, to pay more attention to the seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial heartland of the south-western Cape where slavery, inter-group relations and economic issues became prime topics. Everywhere, explorations into the inter-connectedness of race and class became the dominant issue.

After 1970 Legassick himself moved into the field of twentieth century studies where his insights put him in the vanguard of the radical challenge. When next he visited the frontier, as he did when he contributed a chapter on the northern Cape frontier zone to the 1979 edition of *The Shaping of South African Society*, it was to rework his theoretical understanding of the processes involved rather than to indulge in further archival research.⁴⁶ His application of Marxist concepts to a frontier zone situation was impressive and inspiring though many student readers found it difficult to follow an account where "the commodity" loomed larger than character or

46. Martin Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to 1820: The emergence of the Griqua people", in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1820* (Cape Town, 1st ed., 1979).

event. With hindsight it was perhaps a mistake to attempt to relate developments on the frontier zone so closely to either commodity exchange or the concept of a transition from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism in the metropolitan powers. This is not to deny that Marxist paradigms can generate revelatory explanations. It is simply to suggest that commodity exchange was not necessarily the most important activity on the frontier and that the focus of analytical attention should fall on the activity that was, namely pastoral production. The fact that a cow or an ox can be regarded as a commodity does not mean that this is the most important feature of the animal, nor that pastoralism should be regarded primarily as a type of commodity production. What was needed was a paradigm that, in a sense, explained the grass-roots interactions of frontier societies, stressing the mixed nature of the modes of production involved in the frontier zone situation rather than a model which stressed the teleological design of capitalism in all things.

Legassick's account of the northern frontier zone also left space for future researchers in a number of other areas. His stress upon "Bastaards" and commodity production led him to highlight trading and raiding at the expense of pastoral production. This emphasis was partly due to the nature of the records (which tended to dwell on the drama of banditry and illegal trading more than the mundanities of cattle herding) and partly due to the fact that the "Bastaards", occupying the more arid and lawless regions of the frontier zone, were indeed more active in trading and raiding than others. The consequences of this selective focus were to detract attention not only from pastoral production but also from the principal participants involved in pastoral production - the *trekboers* and the Khoikhoi. The Khoikhoi were absorbed or integrated into the colony following the advance of the *trekboers* into the interior. Since *trekboer* expansion had largely ceased before 1780 (the starting date of Legassick's thesis) the processes of Khoikhoi subjugation and acculturation were not examined in any detail, a decision shaped, no doubt, by his lack of access to eighteenth century archival sources. This unavoidable concentration on the post 1780 northern frontier zone meant that the story of this frontier zone between 1700 and 1780 still remained untold since even Van der Merwe had covered this ground rather rapidly.

If the Khoikhoi were neglected, so too were the San. Despite having drawn attention to the significance of the commando system and the importance of San resistance Legassick had not really integrated these themes into his thesis. The relationship between the Khoikhoi and the San required further exploration and so too did the topic of Khoisan resistance in general. Legassick saw Khoisan resistance as having been largely a phenomenon of the north-eastern frontier and

this tendency to sheer the eastern regions of the northern frontier zone from his study was unfortunate. The geographical focus of Legassick's northern frontier was very much on Namaqualand and Transorania with the consequence that the crucial regions of the interior escarpment (the Roggeveld, the Nieuweveld and the Bushmanland interior) were largely neglected.

To point out these omissions is not to criticise Legassick, merely to indicate areas of research which, quite understandably, he did not wish to cover in his already massive thesis. He had succeeded, in both his thesis and his "Frontier Tradition" paper, in transforming the notion of a frontier zone and casting serious doubts on the conventional view of the frontier's significance. A large part of his argument depended on portraying the northern frontier zone in particular as having different characteristics to the stereotypical South African frontier (the eastern frontier) that historians had hitherto portrayed in their work. In drawing attention to the complexities and varieties of frontier zone interactions, however, it is possible that he might have left his readers with the impression that the frontier zone was not as violent a place as was once thought. This was not Legassick's intention but the evidence which will be presented in this thesis is that violence remains, even in the northern frontier zone, all pervasive. It will also become evident that ill treatment of Khoisan labourers was not more common in the highly colonised areas behind the frontier: it occurred with sickening regularity in the outermost frontier farms and, it is an incontrovertible fact, that commandos and Khoisan resistance in the frontier zone did lead to heightened levels of violence and cruelty directed towards virtually all non-white frontier societies. The frontier zone, in other words, is still a prime suspect when it comes to accounting for the development of a racially stratified, unequal and divided South Africa but Legassick's great virtue was to suggest that it was not the only suspect and that the evidence was far from unambiguous.

Much of the research which was undertaken in the field of South African history in the 1970s and 1980s was an attempt to interrogate some of the other suspects which Legassick had named and to subject all available evidence to a far more subtle analysis than before. Legassick cannot, of course, be credited with having inspired all of this research but he had demonstrated that the time was right for a fresh approach to the South African past. For our purposes, some of the most significant research was that which explored the economic connections which existed between the eighteenth century Cape frontier zone and the colonial heartland of the south-western Cape. Of particular relevance here was the 1974 doctoral thesis of the historical geographer,

Leonard Guelke, on the early European settlement of South Africa.⁴⁷ Guelke, in both his thesis and subsequent works, paid close attention to the economic circumstances of both *trekboers* and that class of wealthy, landed agriculturists closer to Cape Town whom he, and others such as Robert Shell and Robert Ross, would later describe as the Cape gentry.⁴⁸ By doing so he revived an earlier debate, closely associated with the work of S.D. Neumark, on the extent to which colonial frontier expansion had been influenced by the pursuit of economic opportunities within the Cape interior.⁴⁹ Legassick had noted Neumark's work with approval but Guelke's research suggested that it was not so much economic incentives that lured *trekboers* into the interior as it was economic imperatives that forced them thither.⁵⁰ Robert Ross contributed a number of other important articles on the nature of Cape society, both within and outside of the frontier zone, which further explored the interconnectedness of race, class, and capitalism.⁵¹ The culmination of this economic research into early Cape society was a book which Ross co-authored with Pieter van Duin on the eighteenth century Cape economy. The statistical evidence presented here showed that the Cape was not a stagnant, under-productive economy but one which was experiencing substantial economic growth, in all of the major productive sectors, throughout the eighteenth century.⁵² The implications of these conclusions seemed to be that economic forces were likely to have played a far greater role than imagined within the frontier zone.

Major advances were also made in the study of intergroup relations amongst the societies of the Cape as historians explored the theme of the interconnectedness of race and class.⁵³ A common

47. Leonard Guelke, "The Early European Settlement of South Africa" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1974).

48. L. Guelke and R. Shell, "An Early Colonial Landed Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony (1652-1731)", *Journal of Historical Geography*, ix, 1983. R. Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, II, 1983.

49. S.D. Neumark, *Economic Influences on the South African Frontier, 1652-1836* (Stanford, 1957).

50. For a convenient discussion of the economic factors in the debate see L. Guelke, "Freehold farmers and frontier settlers, 1657-1870", in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1840* (Cape Town, 2nd ed., 1989), pp. 66-108.

51. See especially R. Ross, "Capitalism, Expansion, and Incorporation on the Southern African Frontier", in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, (eds.), *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, 1981) and "The first Two Centuries of Colonial Agriculture in the Cape Colony: A Historiographical Review", *Social Dynamics*, 9, 1983.

52. Pieter van Duin and Robert Ross, *The Economy Of The Cape Colony In The Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1987).

53. Amongst the important contributions in this respect see R. Elphick and R. Shell, "Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795", and R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, "The origins and entrenchment of European dominance at the Cape, 1652-c.1840", in Elphick and Giliomee, *Shaping of South African Society*, 2nd edition; H. Giliomee, "Eighteenth Century Cape Society and its Historiography: Culture, Race and Class", *Social Dynamics*, 9, 1983, W.M. Freund, "Race in the Social Structure of South Africa 1652-1836", *Race And Class*, XVII, 1976.

finding of these studies was that racial stratification in Cape society seemed to get worse as time went by. The convergence of economic status and racial status also became more apparent as the eighteenth century progressed. The crucial significance of slavery in Cape society was highlighted by the work of James Armstrong,⁵⁴ Robert Ross,⁵⁵ Nigel Worden⁵⁶ and Robert Shell⁵⁷ which demonstrated that the Cape was a slave society and that slavery influenced every aspect of the colony's social, political and economic life. An ambitious work of comparative history, by G. Fredrickson, compared South Africa with North America and, rather perversely, concluded that slavery had not played as crucial a role in shaping South African race attitudes.⁵⁸ Despite this opinion it seemed as though the lines of race and class converged most strongly in the institution of slavery and that the frontier was, after all of marginal significance in terms of exerting an influence on Cape society. It was, perhaps, more important to establish what influence the institution of slavery had exerted on the frontier than to ask how much the frontier experience had influenced the treatment of non-whites within the colony.

A major contribution to the study of the Khoisan occurred in 1972 with the completion of Rick Elphick's doctoral thesis on the Khoikhoi and the seventeenth century Cape colony.⁵⁹ Elphick's thesis proved that it was possible to use seventeenth and eighteenth century archival material in such a way so as to be able to provide a detailed and lively account of the greatly neglected Khoikhoi. He showed that racist perceptions of the Khoikhoi had pre-dated Van Riebeeck's arrival and that the frontier began at the beaches of Table Bay. His account ended with the devastating effects of the smallpox epidemic of 1713, which virtually removed the Khoikhoi presence from the south-western Cape and also from the written records of the Company officials. An extremely influential feature of Elphick's work was his explanation of the relationship between Khoikhoi pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers. He suggested that since the ancestors of the Khoikhoi had been hunter-gatherers there was no insuperable barrier to prevent either San from becoming Khoikhoi or Khoikhoi from becoming San. In presenting his theory as a cyclical process of upwards or downwards mobility Elphick was responsible both for blurring

54. James Armstrong, "The Slaves, 1652-1795", in Elphick and Giliomee, *Shaping of South African Society*, 1st ed., and, with Nigel Worden, "The Slaves, 1652-1834", in Elphick and Giliomee, *Shaping of South African Society*, 2nd ed.

55. R. Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (London, 1983).

56. N. Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge, 1985).

57. R. Shell, "Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope", (Ph.D. thesis, 2 vols., Yale University, 1986).

58. G. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy. A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York, 1981).

59. R. Elphick, "The Cape Khoi and the First Phase of South African Race Relations" (Ph.D thesis, Yale University, 1972). This was subsequently published as *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (New Haven, 1977; new edition Johannesburg, 1985).

the distinction between Khoikhoi and San and provoking a debate - amongst historians, archaeologists and anthropologists - which shows no sign of abating.⁶⁰ Shula Marks was quick to point out that the reason why historians had underestimated Khoikhoi resistance to European colonisation in the eighteenth century was that they had failed to realise that it had merged with San resistance and that it would henceforth be more accurate to refer to Khoisan resistance.⁶¹ Others, led by John Wright and Andy Smith, drew attention to the social and cultural difficulties which would have inhibited the easy transformation of San into Khoikhoi, or vice versa.⁶² A positive by-product of this debate was to remove both Khoikhoi and San from the synchronic, ahistorical realm to which so many anthropologists had relegated them and place them within a diachronic, historical context. John Wright went on to produce a study of the San of the nineteenth century Drakensberg, portraying them as active historical agents.⁶³ Later studies by Robert Gordon and Edwin Wilmsen did the same for the San of Namibia and the Kalahari.⁶⁴ There was still, however, no comparable study of the Cape Khoisan during the most crucial years of their contact with the forces of colonisation - the eighteenth century.

Historiographical debate concerning the concept of frontiers did not cease with Legassick's "Frontier Tradition" paper and an important collection of essays, edited by Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, saw publication in 1981.⁶⁵ The essays in question dealt with the frontier in both North America and South Africa and, as with Fredrickson's book, demonstrated that comparative studies generated particularly exciting ideas. Hermann Giliomee's contribution, "Processes in Development of the South African Frontier" introduced the useful concepts of an "open" and "closing" frontier which, when coupled with the concept of a frontier zone, significantly advanced the conceptual language of frontier historians.⁶⁶ Giliomee applied these

60. See pp.43-47 below for further discussion of this debate.

61. Shula Marks, "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Journal of African History*, XIII, 1972.

62. J.B. Wright, "Factors Inhibiting a shift to a stock-keeping economy by South African Hunter-Gatherer Societies", (unpublished paper, Conference on the History of the Transkei and Ciskei, no date); A.B. Smith, "Competition, conflict and clientship: Khoi and San relationships in the Western Cape", in Martin Hall and Andrew B. Smith, (eds.), *Prehistoric Pastoralism in Southern Africa: The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, Vol. 5, June 1986 and "On Becoming Herders: Khoikhoi and San Ethnicity in Southern Africa", *African Studies*, 49, 1990.

63. J.B. Wright, *Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg 1840-1870* (Pietermaritzburg, 1971).

64. R.J. Gordon, *The Bushman Myth* (Boulder, 1992); E.W. Wilmsen, *Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago, 1989).

65. Lamar and Thompson, *Frontier in History*.

66. H. Giliomee, "Processes in Development of the Southern African Frontier", in Lamar and Thompson, (eds.), *Frontier in History*, pp.76-119. Legassick used the term "restabilization" of the frontier zone where Giliomee used

concepts to his own work on the eastern frontier zone and produced a skilful short synthesis of a highly complex and complicated region.⁶⁷

Other studies of the eastern frontier followed. Susan Newton-King and Candy Malherbe wrote on the 1799-1803 Khoikhoi rebellion of the eastern frontier and explained that the cause of the rebellion lay in the horrific treatment which Khoikhoi servants received at the hands of their colonial masters.⁶⁸ The detailed, sensitive research of these two historians suggested that it was possible to reconstruct an account of the relationships which bound Khoisan labourers and colonial farmers together in the eighteenth century. In the meantime, Jeff Peires had succeeded admirably in writing a history of the Xhosa perceived from the "other side of the frontier".⁶⁹ A fine narrative history of the frontier wars, written by John Milton, demonstrated that the story of the eastern frontier, properly told, was one of the most exciting chapters of history anywhere.⁷⁰

After Legassick's thesis, research on the northern frontier zone seemed to be preoccupied with the northwards extension of the frontier during the nineteenth century. R. Moorsom and Brigitte Lau were concerned with analysing the political economy of the Oorlam groups in southern Namibia. Like Legassick, their account stressed the trading and raiding activities of their subject rather than their pastoralism. The Oorlams were seen as bearers of merchant capital. The "commando group" (Lau's term for the institution of the commando) was acknowledged to have had a major influence on the structure of Oorlam society but its origins and functions within the dynamics of pastoral production were not sufficiently discussed.⁷¹ A recent thesis by Tilman Dederling has paid far more attention to the pastoral economy of southern Namibia and examined the role of missionaries amongst the Khoikhoi and Oorlam societies of the region during the early nineteenth century.⁷² In 1976 Robert Ross published a history of Adam Kok's Griquas. Like Legassick he

"closure". Legassick, "The Griqua, The Sotho-Tswana, and the Missionaries", p.124. For a discussion of the "open" and "closed" frontier zone see pp.30-31 below.

67. H. Giliomee, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812", in Elphick and Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*, 2nd ed., pp.420-471.

68. S. Newton-King and V. C. Malherbe, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape, 1799-1803* (Cape Town, 1984).

69. J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence* (Johannesburg, 1981).

70. John Milton, *The Edges of War* (Johannesburg, 1983).

71. R. Moorsom, "The Political economy of Namibia until 1945" (M.A., Sussex University, 1973); B. Lau, "The Emergence of Konunando Politics in Namaland, Southern Namibia, 1800-1870" (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1982). Lau has subsequently published a version of her thesis as *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (Windhoek, 1987). See also Alvin Kienetz, "The Key Role of the Oorlam Migration in the Early Europeanization of South West Africa (Namibia)", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10, (4), 1977, pp.553-73.

72. Tilman Dederling, "Southern Namibia c.1780-c.1840: Khoikhoi, Missionaries and the Advancing Frontier" (Ph.D., University of Cape Town, 1989).

realised that the fate of the Griqua was typically representative of the major themes of South African history and that by charting their changing status - social, political and economic - one could follow the progress of racial discrimination, economic impoverishment and political subjugation in a particularly revealing case study.⁷³ Other studies which focused on nineteenth century northern frontier groups were those of Kallaway and Anderson on the Xhosa of the northern Cape and Ross and Strauss on the Korana.⁷⁴ A noteworthy publication which made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the eighteenth century history of Oorlam groups was a paper written by Johannes du Bruyn.⁷⁵ For some reason this much referred to paper was never published and Du Bruyn, like so many other frontier historians, trekked further northwards to devote his attention to a study of the first missionaries amongst the southern Tswana.⁷⁶ The eighteenth century northern Cape frontier zone remained wide open for research.

Whilst work on the present thesis was proceeding a number of important studies, which are of relevance to the eighteenth century northern frontier, have been completed. The most significant of these is Susan Newton-King's doctoral thesis on the eastern frontier between the years 1760-1799.⁷⁷ A large part of Newton-King's thesis is devoted to an enquiry into the subjugation, resistance and incorporation of the Khoisan of the north-eastern frontier into the *trekboer* economy and her work reveals that, in so far as this theme is concerned, there are many similarities between the northern and eastern frontiers. Since the fate of the eighteenth century Khoisan is also of central importance to the present thesis some overlap of interests, and indeed of interpretations and approaches, has been inevitable. There are also, however, differences of opinion and interpretation, some of which have to do with the different nature of the frontier zones under consideration and the different periods of time discussed. Some of the points of divergence and convergence will be raised during the course of the present thesis but it is of relevance at this stage to point out that although Newton-King's work is an exciting new exploration of the neglected field of eighteenth century Khoisan studies it is, simultaneously, a

73. R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa* (London, 1976).

74. Peter Kallaway, "Danster and the Xhosa of the Gariep: Towards a Political Economy of the Cape Frontier 1790-1820", *African Studies*, 41, 1, 1982, pp. 143-160; Elizabeth Anderson, *A History of the Xhosa of the Northern Cape 1795-1879* (Cape Town, 1985); R. Ross, "The !Kora Wars on the Orange River, 1830-1880", *Journal of African History*, 16, 1975, pp.561-576; Teresa Strauss, *War Along the Orange: The Korana and the border wars of 1868-9 and 1878-9* (Cape Town, 1979).

75. J.T. du Bruyn, "The Oorlam Afrikaners: from dependence to dominance, c.1760-1823 (Paper delivered to the S.A. Historical Society Conference, Durban, July 1981).

76. J.T. du Bruyn, "Die Aanvangsjare van die Christelike Sending onder die Tlhaping, 1800-1825", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, 1989, II.

77. Susan Newton-King, "The Enemy Within: The Struggle for Ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier 1760-1799" (Ph.D., University of London, 1992).

reaffirmation of the traditional view that, ultimately, it is the eastern frontier that is the frontier in South African history. This viewpoint needs some qualification.

Newton-King has documented and analysed the great cruelties which were inflicted upon Khoisan labourers by their Boer masters. Her work seems to reinforce an earlier observation of Legassick:

It would appear, from an overview of the evidence, that the main oppression of the Khoi occurred in the eastern parts of the frontier zone. It was here that white settlement was most dense and it could be argued that the establishment of rigidly hierarchical relations between white and Khoi was the consequence of restabilization of the frontier society rather than its evolution. Further, it was in the eastern area, for the most part, that the descendants of those who had moved *overbergh* as pastoralists once again began to supplement or supplant their cattle herding by agriculture. Agriculture requires increased, and more disciplined labour, than herding cattle and requires it seasonally: this might be an added factor in the seemingly worse treatment accorded to the Khoikhoi in this area.⁷⁸

Russel Viljoen's recent study of the treatment of Khoikhoi labourers in the Overberg district also supports this interpretation and we now have a welter of evidence concerning the sufferings of the Khoisan in the districts of Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet.⁷⁹

In attempting to interpret and explain the high level of violence and brutality directed against the Khoisan of the eastern frontier districts Newton-King has attached great significance to the economic motivations which might have encouraged such harsh exploitation of the indigenous labourers. Following Legassick's suggestion that the starting point for a study of social relationships in the Cape colony should be a concentration on commodity exchange, Newton-King has gone to exemplary lengths to document the movement and accumulation of cash and commodities amongst the frontier farmers of the eastern Cape.⁸⁰ The results of her research have been to demonstrate that the colonists of these regions were not economically self-sufficient and that they were so closely tied to the market by the cash and commodities nexus that they were vulnerable to the exigencies of market fluctuations. The brutal treatment of Khoisan labour was thus, in part, an attempt to produce more commodities and sell them on the market.

78. Legassick, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries", pp.100-101.

79. Russel S. Viljoen, "Khoisan Labour Relations in the Overberg Districts during the latter half of the 18th Century, c.1755-1795" (M.A., University of the Western Cape, 1993).

80. See an earlier paper of Newton-King's on this subject, "Commerce and material culture on the Eastern Cape frontier 1764-1812", *Collected Seminar Papers: Societies of Southern Africa*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, Vol. 14 1985, and "Some Thoughts on the Political Economy of Graaff-Reinet" (unpublished seminar paper, 1984).

Though Newton-King realises that market forces are not the only reasons for the mistreatment of the Khoisan it is important, once again, to note how the context and character of the late eighteenth century eastern frontier differs from the northern frontier zone. Firstly, as both Legassick and Newton-King stress, the eastern frontier was of greater economic importance to the colony than the northern frontier, both by virtue of its agricultural potential and because of the fact that, especially after 1770, the livestock rearing potential of the eastern frontier began to be developed in a manner which far overshadowed the capabilities of the arid northern frontier districts. The northern frontier was not as closely bound to the Cape market and the implications of this will be developed in this thesis. The fact that equally brutal treatment of Khoisan labourers occurred on the northern frontier cannot therefore be attributed, or at least not to the same degree as it is in the eastern Cape, to the influence of market forces. Violent racism was not determined by economic factors. It is, in fact, arguable that the greater incidence of brutality in the eastern Cape is not due to the baleful influence of the circulation of commodities but is simply due to the fact that there were more people in the region.

The superior environment of the eastern regions resulted in a higher population density - of both Khoisan and colonists - and hence a greater likelihood of contact between these groups. Once the *drostdies* of Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet had been established there was more chance of these contacts being documented by the colonial authorities and, eventually, more evidence of violence for historians of the eastern Cape to discover. The superior economic potential of the eastern Cape, and its higher population density, point towards the second major difference between the northern frontier zone and the eastern frontier. Whereas the northern frontier zone opened at the beginning of the eighteenth century and remained open, in parts, until the nineteenth century, the eastern frontier began to close almost as soon as it opened.⁸¹ There is virtually no time span between the entry of *trekboers* into the Sneeuberg/Fish River districts of the eastern Cape in the 1770s and the commencement of a chronic struggle - between colonists, Xhosa and Khoisan - for the already scarce supplies of land. Effective closure of the eastern frontier may be said to date

81. It is not too far fetched to see South Africa's border war in Angola as having been a continuation, at least psychologically, of the northern frontier zone. One can argue that by the twentieth century the frontier, or "the border" as it became known to many South Africans, had become a necessary myth, a place where the inchoate dangers of the "total onslaught" could be identified and confronted in military combat. The commando system, now evolved into the SADF military machine, performed some of the functions it had always fulfilled, such as instilling group-consciousness amongst white conscripts whilst simultaneously disciplining and acculturating non-white auxiliaries (including, ironically enough, "Bushmen" trackers). It also, of course, sought to impose colonial rule on the unsubjected Africans beyond the frontier. Though the continuities in frontier history need much further development we should note, in passing, that the design of the Casspir is far too close to that of an ox wagon to be completely, functionally efficient. Cultural factors and historical traditions played a part in its design.

from the expulsion of the Xhosa beyond the Fish River in 1811 and it may thus be seen that the eastern frontier did not enjoy anything like the same period of "openness" as the northern frontier. Nor did it ever have the same safety valves available, in the form of marginal land, for those groups which preferred to opt out of the murderous competition for resources. After 1811 the frontier societies of the eastern Cape settled into a dour struggle for survival where there could only be one winner and where the losers were either ruthlessly incorporated into the dominant society as inferiors or forced to live outside it in marginal and disadvantaged dependence. And, as so many commentators on the frontier tradition have reminded us, all subsequent South African history seemed to be shaped by the type of closure experienced on the eastern frontier.

Since 1994, however, there is no longer a convincing reason why a closed frontier model, based on the eastern Cape frontier, should be regarded as the pre-ordained blue print of South African history. The widespread acceptance of the election results of 1994 has begun a process of the rolling back, or opening, of frontiers everywhere. With black premiers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State the Great Trek must now be seen as having achieved quite different results to those with which historians once credited it. The Xhosa of the eastern Cape have not only recrossed the Fish River but, for the first time, crossed the Liesbeeck River as well. It is possible that an "open" frontier situation, as existed in the northern frontier zone for so long, will be seen as being the more typical South African scenario after all. Unfortunately, however, violence remains, a constant of all frontiers and of all times.

Two recent books on the eastern frontier, though very different in their approach, reiterate the primacy of the eastern frontier in South African history and develop a new version of the frontier thesis.⁸² Mostert and Crais are no longer content to argue, as did Walker, that it was the frontier tradition which developed on the eastern Cape frontier, in the two generations before the Great Trek, which had such a profound influence on South African history. Instead, whilst keeping the geographical focus the same, they seek to shift the crucial period to a later date. The eastern frontier is still seen as the region where whites and non-whites learn to hate each other, where racist ideology becomes institutionalised, and where non-whites are forced to adopt a subordinate political, social and economic status. The difference, however, is that the crucial period is now identified as that which began after the Fifth Frontier War of 1834 and the villains of the piece are no longer the Afrikaners but the British colonial government, the British eastern Cape settlers

82. Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London, 1992); Clifton Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Johannesburg, 1992).

and the British army. The details of this interpretation need not concern us here.⁸³ By changing our perspective of the eastern frontier both authors have performed an invaluable service and Mostert's superb narrative history must hearten all who enjoy reading history. It should be noted, however, that the arguments of Mostert and Crais are, basically, updated versions of the frontier tradition. Though their emphasis on the eastern frontier is to be expected it is regrettable that, in seeking to portray developments within the nineteenth century British eastern Cape as being the key to subsequent South African history, Crais, in particular, under-values the influence of the Dutch period of rule in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A great deal of the post-Legassick research on frontiers has therefore, one way or another, reconfirmed the power of the frontier tradition and stressed the significance of the frontier experience. This is, perhaps, inevitable. No one who writes about frontiers is likely to claim that the influence of the frontier is negligible. After Legassick, however, no one has been quite so bold as to give primacy to the frontier experience when analysing the nature of South African society or the peculiarities of the South African character (if such a thing exists). Despite Legassick's cautionary advice it remains easy to overestimate the significance of the frontier in South African history. After all, it was on the frontier that the truly vital issues were decided in a short space of time: issues such as who should own the land and under what conditions, and who should work for whom and under what conditions.

If the frontier, then, remains significant its significance should not only be sought in the much disputed territories of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century eastern Cape. The frontier of the frontier tradition first began on the northern fringes of the colony in the early eighteenth century. The northern frontier came first, and simply by virtue of this priority it can claim to have exerted the influence of a prototype over subsequent developments. The *trekboer* economy first evolved in the hinterland of Stellenbosch and the first Khoikhoi entered colonial service as pastoralist labourers at the same time. The first Khoisan resistance to the expansion of the colony beyond the Cape Peninsula took place when white farmers entered the Tulbagh basin at the beginning of the century and the commando system evolved as a means to combat this opposition. A pattern of nearly two centuries of violence had been set. It was in the sand dunes of the Sandveld and the mountains of Drakenstein that the first *drosters* and proto-Oorlams assembled, ancestors of the societies that would one day rule vast territories north of the Orange

83. See Legassick's review of these books in "The state, racism and the rise of capitalism in the nineteenth-century Cape colony", *South African Historical Journal*, 28, 1993, pp.329-368.

River. The first white settlers to trek into the Sneeuwberg and Agter Bruintjes Hoogte districts of the eastern Cape in the 1770s had been taught in the hard school of the northern frontier's Roggeveld and Nieuweveld districts long before this. The eastern frontier, in other words, was an off-shoot of the northern frontier and its origins are to be sought in the seventy years of frontier history before 1770. Only once the full story of the northern Cape frontier zone has been incorporated into South African frontier history will it be possible to make a truthful reassessment of the frontier tradition as a whole. Although the present thesis does not claim to be the definitive or final account alluded to above its intention is to go some way towards rectifying the omissions and neglect which this, in many ways foremost frontier, has suffered in the past.

PASTORALISM: A THEMATIC APPROACH

This thesis is, in many respects, a response to the historical works which have been discussed above. In some cases it develops the ideas and insights of certain historians whilst in other instances it disagrees with existing interpretations and proposes new ones. Above all, however, this thesis is an attempt to fill in some of the immense gaps which exist in our knowledge of the history of the northern Cape frontier zone in the eighteenth century. One of the most obvious of these gaps is that we simply do not have a historical narrative which describes and analyses the expansion of the colonial frontier into the Cape interior during the eighteenth century and which, simultaneously, considers what impact this had on the Khoisan societies of the interior. It is no exaggeration to state that the history of the conquest, extermination or incorporation of the Khoisan societies of the northern frontier zone in the eighteenth century has not been told. Nor has the strength, scale or diversity of Khoisan resistance been adequately described. This thesis is, therefore, first and foremost, an attempt to provide a comprehensive account of eighteenth century colonial expansion and a discussion of its impact on the Khoisan societies of the Cape interior.

It should be noted that the geographical focus of this study's attention moves, with the frontier zone itself, from the banks of the Berg River in the south-western Cape of 1700 to beyond the northern banks of the Orange River in the early nineteenth century. The western and eastern limits of this area are formed by the Atlantic ocean on the one hand and the eastern frontier districts of Graaff-Reinet on the other. This is, in other words, an expansive and dynamic view of the northern frontier zone and not one which sees the frontier as having come into existence in the 1770s. The Sneeuwberg districts of the north-eastern frontier are seen as having been integral to the northern frontier zone as a whole until the year 1785 when they fell under the jurisdiction of

the new *drostdy* of Graaff-Reinet. After this date they became far more closely attached to the history of the eastern frontier zone and do not, therefore, feature as strongly as before in the present study.

The concept of a "frontier zone" which informs this thesis is similar to that which was proposed by Legassick but it has undergone certain refinements. For our purposes a frontier zone may best be described as a spatio-temporal area of interaction "between people either subject to different political authorities and/or engaged in different modes of production, or indeed recognising no formal authority at all, and therefore perhaps as individuals marking the precise point of articulation and change between different modes".⁸⁴ The use of Marxist terminology and Marxist paradigms will not, hopefully, be seen as being too anachronistic in the changed circumstances of the 1990s for the fact remains that the mode of production paradigm is an extremely useful model for dealing with the complex interdigitation of previously distinct social formations occupying very different stages of development. It should be stressed, however, that the concept of a mode of production includes within it the cultural or social domain.

Where Legassick and others writing within a Marxist paradigm chose to use the concept of merchant capital and commodity exchange to explain frontier dynamics, it is probably clearer to employ a different approach. The northern Cape frontier provides an excellent example of a process that was taking place throughout the world concomitant with the expansion of the European world economy;⁸⁵ it was an incident in a particular phase of the capitalist mode of production, that of primitive accumulation. Marx has described primitive accumulation as being "nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" and calls it "primitive" because it forms the pre-history of capitalism or its point of departure.⁸⁶ Another feature of primitive accumulation is that it is basically an extractive process: surplus value is extracted from the producers without them receiving an equal value in return. The capital acquired in this way (the surplus value is converted into capital) is then removed from the societies of the producers and the effect is to undermine their social structures.⁸⁷ This, basically, was what occurred in the northern Cape frontier zone. Needless to say the process was neither

84. Marks and Atmore, "Introduction", *Economy and Society*, p.9.

85. See for example I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System, Vol. 1. Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century* (New York, 1974); A.G. Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492-1789* (London, 1978).

86. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp.873-875.

87. Frank, *World Accumulation*, pp.238-248.

instantaneous nor simple and in order to identify different stages in this process the concept of the frontier zone needs a further refinement.

Giliomee has suggested that two major phases within a frontier zone be recognised, the "open" and the "closed" stage.⁸⁸ According to Giliomee an "open" frontier zone is one where there is a rough balance of power between two or more societies competing for land or resources whereas a "closing" frontier is one in which the balance of power has tipped in favour of one of the societies rather than another. Processes of closure occur in the economic, social and political spheres and insofar as the South African frontier is concerned assume the following aspects:

- (1) economic closure, manifested in growing scarcity of land and resources, a shift from subsistence to commercial farming and increasing control of the means of production by a specific class;
- (2) growing social stratification as discrete "races" or ethnic groups merge into a plural society with a given set of caste or class relationships, and
- (3) political closure, in the imposition of a single source of authority.⁸⁹

Having made the above distinctions it may be stated that, in a frontier zone, primitive accumulation is carried out through a process of closure as one society becomes dominant at the expense of others. A problem which arises, however, is that it is not always possible to regard the societies within a frontier zone as though they are distinct and isolated entities for the hallmark of such a zone is interaction and change. Only as a frontier closes do identities and categories crystallise. Similarly the political and economic relationships which underlie the interactions of the frontier societies are themselves in a constant process of change. In the northern Cape frontier zone different societies were predicated on different modes of production and existed, albeit unequally, side by side. In such circumstances these societies had political and economic features derived from different modes of production and it will be useful to state what these modes of production were.

The dominant mode of production within the frontier zone was, as mentioned above, the capitalist mode in a particular phase of its historical development, namely, that of primitive accumulation. The expansion of the Cape colony had, however, brought the European colonists into contact with societies whose modes of production may be described as being either kin-ordered or tributary modes. Following the definitions of Wolf, a kin-ordered mode of production may be described as one in which "kinship can ... be understood as a way of committing social labour to

88. Giliomee, "Processes in development of the southern African frontier".

89. Ibid., p.79.

the transformation of nature through appeals to filiation and marriage and to consanguinity and affinity",⁹⁰ whereas a tributary mode is a mode of production "in which the primary producer, whether cultivator or herdsman, is allowed access to the means of production, while tribute is extracted from him by political or military means".⁹¹ As shall be seen, all societies in the northern Cape frontier zone had features derived from each of these principal modes. The best way to describe the dynamics of interaction between these different societies is to use a model which allows us to account for the specific economic and political forms which such interaction took at the local level. Such a model should be based on the principal productive activity of the frontier zone and this activity was pastoral production.⁹²

The great virtue of focusing on pastoral production was that it was the major occupation of all of the societies of the frontier zone with the exception of the hunter-gatherer San. The *trekboers*, "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi were all pastoralist societies and it was principally through the dynamics of pastoralism that they absorbed or transformed each other's culture whilst exploiting, serving or co-operating with each other. Pastoralist societies are those societies whose mode of subsistence is based primarily on "the exploitation of a set of spatially dispersed vegetal resources, water etc., by mobile herbivorous herds in search of their food".⁹³ This does not in itself constitute a mode of production. As Claude Lefebure explains:

In our view, the nature of pastoral productive forces, however exclusive they may be (and they are never entirely so), is not the determining factor in establishing the originality of the forms of economic and social organisation developed by the pastoralists. In themselves, to be sure, these productive forces entail varying degrees of constraints, some of which are, from time to time, extremely harsh, and these do delimit a determinative field that is well worth exploring. But it is necessary to study as well the conditions in which the processes and the products of pastoral labour are appropriated at the different levels of social integration (whose internal structure and functioning are themselves factors of production).⁹⁴

In other words, not just the forces but also the relations of production must be considered, and the social form of production may be structured by either capitalist, kin-ordered or tributary

90. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, p.91.

91. Ibid., pp.79-80.

92. See N.G. Penn, "Pastoralists and Pastoralism in the Northern Cape Frontier Zone during the Eighteenth Century", in M. Hall and A.B. Smith (eds.), *Prehistoric Pastoralism in Southern Africa*, pp.62-68.

93. P. Bonte, "Marxist theory and anthropological analysis: the study of nomadic pastoralist societies", in J.S. Kahn and J.R. Llobera (eds.), *The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies* (London, 1981).

94. Claude Lefebure, "Introduction: The specificity of nomadic pastoralist societies", in L'equipe ecologie et anthropologie de societes pastorale (eds.), *Pastoral Production and Society* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.1-2.

modes of production. An example of this is that modern ranchers may be considered to be nomadic pastoralists:

but they are structurally in the same category as farmers who employ wage labour and produce commodities for the market. On the same principal, free peasants applying family labour to land primarily for subsistence, selling only a small portion of their produce in order to buy consumption goods, and yielding up another portion to the state in the form of tax, are in the same category as pastoral nomads who do the same.⁹⁵

With the above reservations in mind it remains necessary and desirable to delineate certain features that are characteristic of nomadic pastoralist societies and demonstrate how these features influenced the interactions of frontier societies in the northern Cape.

Perhaps the most important economic point to make about nomadic pastoralists is that made by Asad: their political and economic organisation is based primarily on production for subsistence.⁹⁶ This was certainly true of the pastoralist societies in the northern Cape frontier zone for most of the eighteenth century though here again one must distinguish between the "open" and "closed" phase of the frontier, between different sections of the frontier, and between different operators within the frontier zone. As we have noted, there has been considerable debate concerning the influence of market forces on frontier pastoralists.⁹⁷ Van Duin and Ross have noted that the meat requirements of the VOC were in the region of a quarter of a million pounds of meat a year in the 1720s and three quarters of a million pounds by the 1770s.⁹⁸ Obviously a large part of this demand was supplied by frontier pastoralists. Even before the advent of the *trekboers* there is evidence that Khoikhoi pastoralists engaged in trade and exchanged livestock so it is clearly not the case that the pastoralists of the northern frontier were immune to market forces.⁹⁹ No one, in fact, has ever claimed that the *trekboers* were not dependent on the south-western Cape for certain commodities - such as gunpowder and firearms. But in an attempt to rectify earlier, somewhat simplistic depictions of the *trekboers* - which sought to characterise them as isolated, independent and self-sufficient wanderers with few social, political or economic links with the south-western Cape - historians have, perhaps, overemphasised the influence of the market. It is the contention of this thesis that the dynamics of the *trekboer* economy were not

95. T. Asad, "Equality in nomadic social systems? Notes towards the dissolution of an anthropological category" in L'equipe ecologie et anthropologie de societes pastorale (eds.), *Pastoral Production and Society*, p.42.

96. Ibid.

97. See p.20 above.

98. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape Colony*, p.66.

99. Elphick, *Kraal and Castle* (New Haven, 1977), pp.62-67.

simply, or even fundamentally, market driven. Reasons for the adoption of pastoralism by certain frontier colonists in the early years of the eighteenth century will be discussed,¹⁰⁰ but the heart of pastoralism's attractiveness was that it provided a means of subsistence.¹⁰¹

It is, understandably, harder to find concrete evidence that pastoralism in the frontier zone was primarily subsistence related than it is to find evidence for involvement in the market economy. Non-market oriented pastoralism leaves no documentation whereas the sale of commodities does. But this should not blind us to the fact that, for frontier pastoralists, ownership of livestock had an importance that far exceeded the market value of their flocks and herds. For frontier farmers the very basis of their existence depended on livestock and this should be the starting point of a consideration of the *trekboer* economy.

The advantage which pastoralism offers to its practitioners is that sheep and cattle usually reproduce themselves at a greater rate than humans. If all goes well a farmer with a flock or herd may expect to attain a degree of self-sufficiency since he can derive meat, milk and clothing from his animals without decreasing the numbers of his breeding stock to dangerously low levels. Furthermore, surplus sheep or cattle can be given to the farmer's sons to provide the nucleus of their own flock or herd. In most pastoralist societies it is only once basic breeding stocks have been secured that farmers regard their animals as being surplus to their requirements and think of selling them. Even then, however, since wealth in a pastoralist society is signified by the possession of large flocks or herds, there may be considerable reluctance to sell or exchange livestock for commodities of inferior status value. The overwhelming priority of the *trekboers* of the northern Cape frontier zone was not to accumulate money but to accumulate a basic breeding stock. So rapid was the advance of the frontier, and so great was the increase in the number of *trekboers*,¹⁰² that for much of the eighteenth century the acquisition or maintenance of subsistence level herds was of greater importance than the sale of meat to the Company's

100. See pp.49-54 below.

101. Ross is surely correct to state that: "Still, to establish on the one hand that the frontiersmen were very largely, if never entirely, self-sufficient and that on the other that they were responsive to market opportunities - that, each in his own way, both Guelke and Neumark are correct - does not provide any deep insight into the dynamics behind the rapid spread of colonial structure throughout what was to become South Africa". Ross, "Economics of the South African Frontier", p.217. Ross chooses to analyse the dynamics of colonial population expansion, believing that it provides the key to understanding frontier expansion. White demographic and territorial expansion was, however, based on the dynamics of pastoral production and pastoral production should, therefore, remain the starting point for an analysis of frontier dynamics.

102. R. Ross, "The 'White' Population of the Cape Colony [South Africa] in the Eighteenth Century", *Population Studies*, XXIX, 1975.

butchers or the accumulation of capital. Once the frontier began to close, vital natural resources, such as land, grazing and water, became scarcer whilst San attacks on colonial livestock became fiercer. In this hostile environment the rising generation of aspirant *trekboers* spent most of their time attempting to carve out a niche for the flocks and herds of their own family. The constant necessity for commando duty did not create conditions which were favourable for the accumulation of a disposable surplus in livestock. Thus it was that in the Hantam during the 1780s many young colonists could not even muster a basic breeding stock of 300 sheep and in bad years in the Roggeveld the Company butchers could not buy any livestock at all from the embattled farmers.¹⁰³

It is significant that those who have presented the most evidence for the market orientation of the *trekboers* have based their conclusions on a study of the eastern frontier. The frontier regions of the eastern Cape did indeed become the principal source of Company meat after the 1770s - largely because of their favourable natural environment. It should be noted, however, that in the vast regions of the northern Cape frontier zone the environment was often so harsh that pastoralists were not able to rise significantly above the level of subsistence. Even in the eastern frontier zone Newton-King's research has shown that, implicated in the market though they were, the majority of farmers died in poverty or in debt.¹⁰⁴ Such evidence suggests that it makes sense to view the *trekboers*, particularly those of the northern Cape, as pastoralists whose principal concern was with the struggle for subsistence.

There is another respect in which the *trekboers* of the northern Cape may be regarded as being semi-nomadic pastoralists and that is that movement or mobility was absolutely essential for their survival. It may be argued that it is inappropriate to describe the *trekboers*, with their system of individually registered loan-farms, as "nomadic" or even "semi-nomadic" pastoralists. Whilst it cannot be denied that the rapid expansion of the colonial frontier was caused by *trekboers* in search of better land, water and grazing for their livestock, this expansive drive did not, in itself, constitute nomadism and was not, in any event, indefinite. The advance of the colonial frontier stalled in the 1770s and, it may be objected, after that date the *trekboers* became more like ranchers, inhabiting fixed areas of land and producing a surplus for sale on the market. But nomadic pastoralists are not called nomadic simply because their societies are characterised by restless demographic expansion or an endless process of trekking beyond the horizon. Even during periods of zero population growth or population contraction, pastoralists have to be

103. See pp.310, 193 below.

104. Newton-King, "Enemy Within", chapter 7.

mobile. Strictly speaking they are nomadic because they adopt a transhumant lifestyle. This means that they seek to maximise production by a seasonal exploitation of natural resources and their movements are thus related to seasonal cycles. For pastoralist societies this necessity arises from the fact that pastoralism usually occurs in areas where the annual rainfall is insufficient to support agriculture. Grasslands within such an area are marginal, their utility being restricted by the occurrence of seasonal rainfall and surface water.

Such conditions were certainly true of the northern Cape and the movements of all pastoralists within the area were organised to respond to the seasonal variations in grazing and water resources. The best strategy for a pastoralist society to adopt was to control an area containing diverse natural resources and subject to different seasonal characteristics. This would ensure that the society would have access to grazing and water all the year round. Within such an area the transhumant orbit of humans and animals would be fairly predictable though subject to alterations by seasonal irregularities, such as drought, or non-natural influences, such as warfare, and the internal dynamics of the society itself.¹⁰⁵ Several such areas, capable of supporting a cycle of transhumance, fell within the northern Cape frontier zone during the eighteenth century. Full control of such an area was absolutely crucial for the pastoralists within it for if access to any one seasonal resource within the area was denied the cycle would be disturbed and survival jeopardised. It is possible to identify the areas and describe the transhumant strategies adopted by the societies living within them but some cautionary remarks have to be made.

Firstly, these areas should not be regarded as being isolated and clearly outlined units but rather as focal points of transhumance cycles. Their boundaries overlapped and shifted with some resources being common to two or more regions. Secondly, these areas were most truly focal points of transhumance cycles during the open frontier stage, that is before the practice of regarding certain favoured places within the area as being private property for the exclusive use of a *trekboer* domestic unit became common. The pre-colonial societies regarded the resource area as being the common property of the community as a whole.¹⁰⁶ The initial entry of the *trekboers* into such an area however did not mean the instant disappearance of the cycles of transhumance, for the *trekboers* were forced to adopt them themselves. This practice could be reconciled to ideas of private ownership by claiming different loan farms at strategic points within the cycle. It was not necessary to own the grazing land between two watering points. It

105. A.B. Smith, "Prehistoric pastoralism in the southwestern Cape, South Africa", *World Archaeology*, 15, 1983.

106. I. Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (London, 1930), pp. 286-291.

was sufficient merely to own the two watering points and the grazing land between would become useless to anyone else. During the open phase of the frontier zone there was undoubtedly a great deal more reciprocal or community sharing of resources amongst the *trekboers* than is reflected by reading the *Oude Wildschut Boeke* (the books in which loan-farm allocations were recorded). The fact that a loan farm was registered in the name of one man only (though sometimes they were registered under two names) does not necessarily mean that only one domestic unit used that farm. Other sources suggest that groups of *trekboers* grazed their herds together for mutual protection and pooled their grazing or water resources.¹⁰⁷ Naturally such arrangements lasted only as long as danger threatened or the resources and carrying capacity of the veld allowed. As the population grew and the frontier closed, as overgrazing occurred and vleis dried up, competition for property became more intense and ideas about ownership more exclusive. The records indicate that boundary disputes and litigation over land increased dramatically as the century progressed. Some areas of Bushmanland, however, were not claimed for individual ownership until the twentieth century and by common consent were used as communal *trekveld* as the lack of water made permanent possession a costly superfluity.¹⁰⁸

A further caution about conceptualising an area which served as the focal point for a cycle of transhumance is that it was not necessarily the exclusive property or territory of one particular society prior to the arrival of the *trekboers*. There was some idea of territoriality amongst the pre-colonial societies but this did not exclude other groups from entering the area.¹⁰⁹ Such visits were usually temporary and it was expected that the intrusive group should recognise the superior rights of the original inhabitants by the payment of some small, symbolic tribute. A group might be forced to leave their accustomed round by war or drought but such inter-regional movements in pre-colonial times, were usually tolerated (provided that they did not jeopardise the resources of the society already present) since they enabled the host society to make reciprocal demands on their visitors in the future.¹¹⁰ Pastoralists were not the only occupants of such regions for hunter-gatherers or San societies sometimes lived within them. They too relied on a

107. See pp.101-102, n.51 below.

108. P. J. van der Merwe, *Pioniers van die Dorsland* (Cape Town, 1941).

109. Schapera, *Khoisan*, pp.286-289; J. Deacon, "My Place is the Bitterpits: The home territory of Bleek and Lloyd's /Xam San informants", *African Studies*, 45, 1986, pp.135-155; J. Deacon, "The power of place in understanding southern San rock engravings", *World Archaeology*, 20, 1988, pp. 129-40; A.B. Smith, "Metaphors of Space: Rock Art and Territoriality in South Africa", in T.A. Dowson and D. Lewis-Williams (eds.), *Contested Images: Diversity in Southern African Rock Art Research* (Johannesburg, 1994), pp.373-384.

110. See Jeremy Keenan's "The Concept of the Mode of Production in Hunter-Gatherer Societies", in Kahn and Llobera (eds.), *The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies*, pp. 2-21 for an account of how San groups ensured access to the territory of other San groups in times of hardship by using name connections.

seasonal exploitation of natural resources.¹¹¹ The game which they hunted frequently followed the same seasonal movements as the flocks and herds of the pastoralists in search of water and grazing. This resulted in competition for resources and necessitated some form of accommodation or agreement between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. For the most part, even in pre-colonial times, the terms of co-existence favoured the pastoralists. Where hunter-gatherers lived in the same area as pastoralists it was usually in the more mountainous parts or those which were less suitable for pastoralism. In addition they had come to rely rather more on the gathering of *veldkos* and less on hunting for their subsistence.¹¹² Even so, until the arrival of the *trekboers* (and for some time after it) they held their own and relationships of clientage between the San and the Khoikhoi have been described.¹¹³ Their independence was, however, threatened by the *trekboers* because the latter had the military strength sufficient to dispense with the tradition of co-existence between pastoralist and hunter-gatherer. At the same time the efficiency of the *trekboers* in exterminating game threatened the basic structure of San existence and left them no choice but to hunt cattle and sheep - an expedient fraught with fatal consequences.

The key to identifying areas in which cycles of transhumance existed is found by considering the environmental constraints influencing pastoral production. The most important of these are rainfall and the availability of surface water: the first because it determines the quality of the pasturage and the second because livestock has to drink regularly. In general, rainfall in the north-western Cape area is highest in the south and west and lowest in the north and east, though the lowest annual rainfall of the entire region occurs on the north-west coast of Namaqualand. West of the Roggeveld mountains, which form the escarpment of the interior plateau, rainfall occurs mainly in the winter months whereas the north-eastern interior is a summer rainfall area. Throughout the region, especially to the north and east of the Olifants and Doorn Rivers, rainfall is very low and rivers are scarce and seldom perennial. In areas of higher altitude, like the Kamiesberg, the cooler temperatures result in greater rainfall whilst springs are most common near mountains and escarpments.

These basic hydrographic features of the northern and western Cape enable us to distinguish five major regions which came within the northern frontier zone at some stage or other during the

111. See for instance John Parkington, "Follow the San" (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 1977), for an account of the seasonal cycles of the San of the western Cape.

112. J. Parkington, "Soaqua: Hunter-fisher-gatherers of the Olifants River Valley, western Cape", *South African Archaeology Bulletin*, 32, 1977, pp.150-57.

113. See pp.81 below. See also A.B. Smith, "Competition, Conflict and Clientship: Khoi and San Relationships in the Western Cape", in Hall and Smith (eds.), *Prehistoric Pastoralism*, pp.36-41.

eighteenth century and which had the resources necessary to support cycles of transhumance within them. These were (1) the south-western Cape; (2) the west coast and Bokkeveld (including the Sandveld, Olifants and Doorn Rivers); (3) the escarpment of the interior plateau (the Hantam, Roggeveld and Nieuweveld mountains; (4) Namaqualand; and (5) the Orange River. The order in which these areas are listed corresponds to the chronological sequence in which they were settled by the *trekboers*, and the movements of *trekboers* from one such region to another are important milestones in the history of the expansion of the colonial frontier. Not only do these movements mark the stage at which the resources of one region become insufficient to support the *trekboer* society, they also mark the stages at which a new struggle for the control of a new area of pastoralist production commenced. It is thus no coincidence that the most intense fighting between the *trekboers* and the Khoisan occurred during periods of transition from one resource area to another.

The chronological development of this thesis closely follows the sequential intrusion of *trekboers* into each of these environmentally crucial areas. Thus, chapter two is largely concerned with the initial expansion of colonists from the locality of the Cape Peninsula into the hinterland of the south-western Cape at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Fighting between the local Khoisan and the *trekboers* broke out immediately. Andy Smith has reconstructed the transhumance orbit of the Cochoqua Khoikhoi of the area, an orbit which was imperilled from the moment that the colonists arrived.¹¹⁴ Unlike much of the country to the north, the south-western Cape received sufficient rain to grow winter crops - crops which were not indigenous to the Cape but which the colonists could grow. The south-western Cape therefore ceased to be important as an area of pastoral production very early in the century. By this stage, however, the independence of the local Khoisan had been destroyed by a combination of military defeat, livestock loss and smallpox. The colonial frontier moved on, incorporating some Khoisan within the colony and chasing others further into the interior.

Chapters three and four deal with the colonial conquest of the second environmentally distinct region: the west coast and Bokkeveld. Major conflict between Khoisan and colonists occurred as the colonists, now more correctly called *trekboers*, crossed the Berg River and entered the west coast/Olifants River region in about 1712. Pastoralism was essential as a means of subsistence in this area, both because the rainfall was less than further south and because the increased distance from Cape Town made transportation of any agricultural produce that might be grown too costly

114. A.B. Smith, "The Disruption of Khoi society in the 17th century", Unpublished paper presented to the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Feb. 1983; see also Smith, "Competition, Conflict and Clientship".

to be profitable. Pastoralist strategy here lay in seizing control of the vleis, river valleys and springs for the area was fortunate in having perennial water, albeit not plentiful. It was important, however, to move cattle and sheep away from the rivers during the winter rains for the young grass gave them diarrhoea and sometimes caused death.¹¹⁵ The conquest of the area was not completed until 1739 when substantial Khoisan resistance to the *trekboers* was decisively crushed in a series of major commandos. The degree of incorporation of the local Khoisan into the *trekboer* economy was already apparent in the fact that many of the Khoisan resisters were ex-colonial servants. It is also significant to note that the war of 1739 coincided with a frontier rebellion of colonists against the government at the Cape - the first indication that a common group consciousness, based largely on perceived economic grievances, was emerging amongst frontier farmers who distinguished themselves from the wealthier gentry of the south-western Cape. For the moment, however, white, colonial, anti-Khoisan unity was necessary in order to defeat the military resistance of the Khoisan. At the same time, miscegenation and growing numbers of frontier fugitives were helping to create a new group which came into existence alongside other frontier societies. These "Bastaards", "Bastaard-Hottentots" and *drosters* - the proto-Oorlams of the northern frontier zone - were to grow in importance as time, and the frontier, advanced.

The most determined resistance of all occurred when the *trekboers* entered the third major environmental region: the escarpment of the interior plateau (the Hantam, Roggeveld and Nicuweveld mountains). Chapters five, six and seven detail the cause, course and consequences of the struggle for the resources of this harsh environment. Beyond this point there was no further region that could serve as the focal point for a cycle of transhumance. Bushmanland and the Great Karoo had too little permanent water. Beyond the Orange River lay the Sotho-Tswana and beyond the Nieuweveld were the Xhosa and the eastern frontier. To retreat in either of these directions was not feasible for the Khoikhoi and San thus only the retention of the escarpment could have preserved them. The escarpment coincided, roughly, with the division between the summer and winter rainfall areas so that it was possible, from this vicinity, for the mobile to enjoy access to year round grazing and water. The escarpment was also where most of the springs were to be found and from these favoured locations pastoralists (and hunter-gatherers) were well suited to exploit the spring vegetation in the Onder Karoo (between the Bokkeveld and Roggeveld) and the good grazing following summer thundershowers beyond the Sak River.

115. Peter E. Raper and Maurice Boucher (eds.), *Robert Jacob Gordon: Cape Travels, 1777 to 1786* (Johannesburg, 1988), Vol. 2, 11 July 1779, p.241.

Water was nearly always scarce, however, and the area subject to droughts. It is clear that the escarpment was a somewhat delicate and marginal resource base for pastoralists from the outset, quite unable to provide adequate grazing or water for large numbers of animals for any length of time.

In these circumstances pastoralists had to be highly mobile. Each *trekboer* had a farm in the Karoo called a *legplaats* for which he did not have to pay rental. Throughout the Roggeveld the winters were very cold and the inhabitants had to trek regularly; in summer to seek the thunder showers and water of the Riet and Sak Rivers of the Great Karoo, and in winter to escape the cold of the mountains. The Nieuweveld was, if anything, even less favoured than the Roggeveld and there are increasing references in the records, as the century went on, to the growing impoverishment of the *trekboers* of this area of the escarpment. Many farms had to be abandoned not so much because of the hostility of the San but because of drought and poor grazing. Disputes over farm boundaries were intense in this area and it was only beyond the Sak River that the veld was regarded as being communal *trekveld* for there the lack of standing water and the strong presence of the San made private ownership extremely unattractive to the *trekboers*.

Without access to the resources on both sides of the escarpment and the water of the escarpment itself both pastoralists and hunter-gatherers were doomed, hence the desperate fighting of the 1770s, 1780s and 1790s. These were years of intense commando activity and Khoisan resistance. The institution of the commando was very much influenced by the dynamics of pastoral production and these connections are explored in chapters six and seven. The typical unit of pastoral production - the domestic unit - also influenced the way in which Khoisan were absorbed within (or forced out of) the *trekboer* economy and this is another theme which is explored in chapters five, six and seven. The ever present and pervasive theme of violence is also discussed.

Chapters eight, nine and ten describe the advance of the colonial frontier into the environmental regions of Namaqualand and the Orange River. The Kamiesberg of Namaqualand provided the centre for another cycle of transhumance. The higher ground of this region was better watered and pastured but pastoralists had to be able to exploit the seasonal grazing of the coast and Bushmanland which, if it received rain in the summer, was a sea of grass. Until at least the 1790s Namaqualand was fairly "open" as the *trekboers* did not have sufficient numbers to evict the Khoikhoi or impose their will on the large numbers of Oorlam frontiersmen in the region. By the end of the 1790s the growing pressures within the region resulted in a combined "Bastaard" and Khoisan revolt against white oppression. Another symptom of the increasing difficulties faced by

the frontier pastoralists of the north-western Cape was that both *trekboers* and Oorlams began to raid the Khoisan societies of the Orange River, disrupting a way of life based on the exploitation of the perennial resources of the river and replacing it with the insecurity of one based on banditry and raiding. The Oorlam groups which had emerged by this time - hardy hybrids of the frontier zone - had acquired the means and techniques to form their own commando groups. This enabled them to escape the political control of the *trekboers* and prey on the societies of Bushmanland, the Orange River and Great Namaqualand. These groups, whose composition reflected elements of all the different social groups within the frontier zone, seem to symbolise all the processes that were in operation within that zone. Partly because they were groups whose structure was based on the commando system and partly because the areas in which they existed were unsuitable for the development and maintenance of a transhumance cycle, they became very active in raiding and trading. It seemed, indeed, that they were not pastoralist societies so much as parasitic societies which preyed on other pastoralist societies and were a threat to both *trekboers* and Khoisan. This should not, however, disguise the fact that the security and cohesion of each of these groups required, at its core, a stock of cattle and sheep to provide the basic subsistence of the group and to serve as a demonstration of wealth and power which attracted followers and overawed the weaker. It should also be noted that livestock raiding is considered to be a structural necessity for pastoralist societies and is thus explicable within the dynamics of pastoralism.¹¹⁶

The thesis concludes with a consideration of those forces which tended towards promoting the social, economic and political closure of the frontier zone. As the eighteenth century drew towards its end the government of the first British administration at the Cape attempted to implement policies which would bring peace and political closure - a task manifestly beyond the resources of the VOC - to the entire frontier, including the northern frontier. In this respect the exertions of missionaries become particularly important and chapters eleven to fourteen discuss their efforts, alongside those of the British government, to "civilise" the frontier zone.

Missionaries first appeared in the northern Cape in the last years of the century and heralded the arrival of a new era in frontier history. Part of their contribution was to accelerate the social and economic transformation of the Khoisan and Oorlam groups, making them more dependent on the culture and commodities of the colony. They also had a political role to play, seeking to enhance the state's control over the turbulent frontier regions. The state approved conversion of the leader

¹¹⁶ See Bonte, "Non-stratified social formations among pastoral nomads", p.191.

of the most powerful Oorlam bandit group marked an important symbolic moment in the closure of the frontier zone. Even more important, however, was the promulgation of the Hottentot Proclamation of 1809 for this signalled that the new British government of the Cape intended to recognise and entrench the colonists' subjugation of their Khoisan and "Bastaard-Hottentot" labourers. For the first time at the Cape there was a government powerful enough to impose its will on the frontier regions. Unfortunately, by backing the colonists, this government endorsed and ensured the outcome of the long process of struggle, decided in the northern frontier zone, for the land, labour and livestock resources of the Khoisan of the Cape interior.

A NOTE ON KHOISAN TERMINOLOGY

Since a large part of this thesis deals with the Khoisan of the Cape interior it will be necessary and desirable to discuss the correct usage of the terms "Khoikhoi", "San" and "Khoisan". In any debate concerning terminology one should never lose sight of the reality behind the terminology, that is with the real people and the real processes involved. As Eric Wolf puts it:

The habit of treating named entities such as Iroquois, Greece, Persia or the United States as fixed entities opposed to one another by stable internal architecture and external boundaries interferes with our ability to understand their mutual encounter and confrontation.¹¹⁷

We should indeed remember that words like "Khoikhoi" and "San" are not timeless ahistorical categories but historical categories and social constructions. It is precisely the dynamic realities that lie behind Khoisan terminology that cause so many of the problems associated with the use of the words. Leaving aside, for a moment, the question as to whether "Khoikhoi" is a better word than "Hottentot", or "San" a better word than "Bushman", one still has to unravel that "Gordian knot of South African ethnography" - the relationship between Khoikhoi and San.¹¹⁸ Many skilful fingers have picked at this knot, some tightening it, others loosening it, but whatever the nature of the relationship it obviously differs according to its historical context.¹¹⁹ The word "Khoisan", for instance, which has become the convenient generic name for both the Khoikhoi and San peoples, implies that there is a relationship between them.¹²⁰ But it means one thing

117. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, p.7.

118. The expression is Elphick's. See Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*, p.4.

119. See M.L. Wilson's review of the debate in "Khoisanosis: The Question of Separate Identities for Khoi and San", in R. Singer and J.K. Lundy (eds.), *Variation, Culture and Evolution in African Population* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp.13-25. The historical usage of the various terms is presented and discussed in G.S. Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname: 'n Voorlopige verkenning* (Pretoria, 1989), pp.616-626 and 830-838.

120. The term "Khoisan" was first used by Leonard Schultze in 1928 but gained wide currency with Schapera's book *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* in 1930. Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.625-626.

when used in the pre-colonial context and another thing in the colonial context. In the former context the processes the word implies are those which relate to the transition of societies or individuals from a predominantly hunting and gathering mode of existence to a predominantly pastoralist mode of existence - and vice versa. In the colonial context, however, the dynamics of Khoikhoi and San interaction were fundamentally altered by the presence of Europeans who first exerted an influence through trade and later by direct settlement and conquest. As far as the realities behind the word "Khoisan" are concerned the question then becomes not: "What is the relationship between Khoikhoi and San?" but: "What is the relationship between Khoikhoi and San and how is this related to the processes of colonisation?"

Elphick attempted to explain how San became Khoikhoi and how Khoikhoi became San in the pre-colonial context by using a model of downward and upward ecological cycles. When a Khoikhoi fell on hard times and lost his livestock to drought, disease or theft he could revert to hunting and gathering until such time as he acquired new stock, usually by stealing some for himself or working as a client for wealthier pastoralists. A hunter-gatherer, on the other hand, could also rise to the status of pastoralist by theft or clientship, acquiring livestock and assuming the identity, in time, of a Khoikhoi. Though Elphick's was not the first explanation it became very influential.¹²¹ It can, and has, been criticised for minimising the social, political, economic and cultural differences between pastoralist and hunter-gatherer societies.¹²² The point to make here, however, is one that Elphick himself made: although some of the Khoikhoi responses to colonialism were shaped by traditional responses to fluctuations in the ecological cycle - for example the recourse to clientship or robbery - the arrival of the Europeans fundamentally changed the cycle itself. It was no longer possible for either Khoikhoi or San to experience upward mobility, only downward mobility or permanent clientship under colonial rule. In these circumstances the relationship between Khoikhoi and San itself was changed. The realities behind the word "Khoisan" are therefore very different in the eighteenth century to what they were in the sixteenth century.

Shula Marks took care to stress how the historical context of colonialism had contributed to the blurring of the lines between Khoikhoi and San in her 1972 article on Khoisan resistance. She noted that the expansion of the colony had resulted in many Khoikhoi losing their livestock.

121. See for instance M. Wilson's chapter, "The hunters and herders", *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1. Elphick's thesis first appeared in 1972.

122. See footnote 62 above. See also A.B. Smith's review essay of Elphick's *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa*, in *Social Dynamics*, 11, (1), 1985, pp.88-90.

When such people, filled with justifiable resentment, resisted further white encroachment, the colonists tended to call them "Bushmen" (or "Bosjesmans"), the name they gave to all cattleless indigenes, whether they were hunter-gatherers or ex-pastoralists. Her response to this situation was to offer the following practical advice:

...the term Khoisan appears best suited to refer to the Late Stone Age peoples of the Cape whom the Dutch encountered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, unless their precise tribal groupings are made clear from the documents.¹²³

The documents, however, very seldom contain the precise name of the Khoisan groups they refer to, though it has to be acknowledged that the seventeenth century documents are much more detailed in this respect than those of the eighteenth century. There are a number of reasons for this. In the seventeenth century the frontier between Khoisan and colonists was close to Cape Town. Literate and curious Company officials, like Van Riebeeck, had direct access to information pertaining to the names of Khoisan groupings. In the eighteenth century, with the expansion of the frontier away from Cape Town, the information about Khoisan groups decreased and was frequently recorded by semi-literate frontiersmen on commando. Thus a more hostile colonial perception of the Khoisan coincided with a decrease in recorded information. A further factor contributing to the obscurity of Khoisan identity was that by the eighteenth century many Khoisan societies had been so disrupted by the impact of colonialism that they had either ceased to exist or lost their identity altogether.

Does this mean that one should shun the use of the words "Khoikhoi" and "San" and use the term "Khoisan" in its place? Given the fact that both Elphick and Marks have stressed the interchangeability of the activities of pastoralism and hunter-gathering, and that the historical context of the eighteenth century blurred these distinctions even more, is it not wiser to use the portmanteau word "Khoisan" in all cases? There are a great many scholars who would approve of such a step for the tendency of much recent research has been to portray the San as a people who have been forced by the exigencies of history into the unwanted position of a sort of pastoralist under-class. "Bushmen", they argue in effect, are a historical creation and did not choose to become hunter-gatherers. They became hunters and gatherers by having their livestock stripped from them or by being prevented from ever acquiring them in the first place. Stronger groups forced them to occupy marginal land and ensured that they would never be able to escape from the poverty of subsistence. In an ideal world of affirmative action, it is argued, instead of racist exploitation, they would be able to fulfil their aspirations and leave the demeaning status of hunter-gatherer for that of pastoralist - or any other more rewarding occupation. The very name

123. S. Marks, "Khoisan Resistance", pp.57-58.

"Bushman" (and even the supposedly politically correct "San"), it is explained, is pejorative, foisted upon the people to whom it applies and implying an innate disposition to thieving savagery.¹²⁴

The debate is older than many of the protagonists realise for Donald Moodie had found it necessary to write a paper against the idea that colonisation had created the "Bushmen" as early as the 1850s.¹²⁵ A significant feature of much of the evidence presented in the modern debate, however, is that it is drawn from nineteenth or twentieth century material about hunter-gatherer societies, a period where, even in the Kalahari desert, the disruptive effects of colonialism in southern Africa were marked. A careful inspection of the historical records of the eighteenth century suggests that there were indeed real differences between Khoikhoi and San and that even though the colonists did not often give the tribal names of the groups in question they were certainly not as vague in their usage as might be supposed. The eighteenth century records are full of references to "Bosjesmans-Hottentotten" and it is tempting to think that by this term Dutch colonists meant "Khoisan". They did not. They meant "Bushmen". As the century progressed the tendency was to drop the "Hottentot" part of the word and retain the "Bosjesman". Nor should we assume that this was simply part of a crude frontier mentality which labelled all resisters "Bushmen" and all collaborators "Hottentot". It was often crucial for a frontier farmer to be able to make a distinction between Khoikhoi and San. Sometimes, indeed, Khoikhoi servants did run away and join San resisters but this did not confuse the colonists so much as infuriate them. Khoikhoi and San could, and did, form alliances but this should not imply that there were no significant distinctions between them.

The approach of this thesis is a pragmatic one. Following Shula Marks' advice Khoisan is used when the identity of the indigenous societies is uncertain or when it is clear that both Khoikhoi and San are involved together. But that there were distinct hunter-gatherer societies, distinct that is from pastoralist societies, is taken as given. The archival documents, the archaeological record and the Bleek-Lloyd manuscripts point towards a distinctive historical presence. Eighteenth

124. For proponents of this view see the works of Robert Gordon and Edwin Wilmsen cited above, footnote 64. See also C. Schrire, "An enquiry into the evolutionary status and apparent identity of San hunter-gatherers", *Human Ecology*, 8, 1980, pp.9-32 and "Wild surmises on savage thoughts", in C. Schrire, (ed.), *Past and Present in Hunter-Gatherer Studies* (New York, 1984), pp.1-25. See also the contributions of various authors following the article by J.S. Solway and R.B. Lee, "Foragers, Genuine or Spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in History", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 31, 2, 1990, pp.109-146.

125. D. Moodie, "A Voice From The Kahlamba: Origin of the Bushmen", in *South African Annals*, 18[50s?], pp.1-32.

century colonists became more aware of this presence as the frontier moved into regions where hunter-gatherers were more commonly found than Khoikhoi. In moving from the south-western Cape to the Cape interior the colonists were moving from an area highly suited to pastoralism to one less suited to pastoralism; from an area of at least 1 500 years of co-existence between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists to an area where such co-existence had been of much shorter duration; from an area where pastoralism was the dominant economic activity to an area where hunting and gathering were dominant; from an area where Khoikhoi and San really were bound together by a long history of interaction to one in which San societies predominated. It was this perception of confronting a society that was even more "other" and primitive than the Khoikhoi that encouraged the colonists to conduct a style of frontier fighting that approached the genocidal after 1770. This is not to say that the colonists did not exaggerate San differences and even equate hostile Khoikhoi with the San when it suited them to do so. It is merely to caution that if we pretend that all societies are simply different versions of each other, and that the San were really just proto- or post-Khoikhoi, then we will not feel, as we should, the tragedy that is involved when a unique culture, like that of the /Xam, becomes extinct.

Colonial Expansion and Khoisan Resistance 1700-1726

COLONIAL EXPANSION PRIOR TO 1700

The beginning of the eighteenth century coincided with a transformation in the nature of the colony at the Cape. Under the guidance of the newly appointed governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, (1699-1707)¹ a process of territorial expansion was initiated which differed, both qualitatively and quantitatively, from that which had gone before. The inauguration of this new policy, in itself a response to the growing crisis within the colony, led to the creation of the northern Cape frontier zone. Since the particular characteristics of this frontier zone were, to a remarkable degree, prefigured in its formative years, it is important to give some attention to the nature of colonial society around the year 1700.²

By the end of the seventeenth century the refreshment station at Cape Town was at last beginning to fulfil its founders' intentions by providing the ships of the VOC with adequate supplies of meat, wheat, vegetables and fresh water. The last of these items had never presented a problem, thanks to the abundant streams and rivers around Table Mountain, but food was a different matter. In order to produce sufficient wheat and vegetables, the Company had been obliged to create a class of independent farmers - the freeburghers - and grant them land enough on which to grow their crops. A variety of environmental and economic factors had dictated that extensive, rather than intensive, methods of farming had to be adopted.³ The result was that during the governorship of Willem Adriaan's father, Simon van der Stel (1679-1699),⁴ the colony spread to the Stellenbosch, Drakenstein, Paarl, Franschoek, Tijgerberg and Wagenmaakers Valley areas.⁵

1. For Willem Adriaan van der Stel and his family see A.J. Boeseken, *Simon Van Der Stel en sy Kinders* (Cape Town, 1964). See also Leo Fouché, (ed.), *The Diary of Adam Tas, 1705-1706* (London, 1914), pp.157-363.

2. Throughout this thesis the word "Cape" (unless it is qualified) refers to the south-western districts of the present Cape Province. In the eighteenth century "De Kaap" referred to the area within a day's journey of Cape Town.

3. For a succinct account of the failure of intensive agriculture see Leonard Guelke, "Freehold farmers and frontier settlers, 1657-1780", in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 2nd edition (Cape Town, 1989), pp.66-73.

4. For Simon van der Stel see Boeseken, *Simon Van Der Stel en sy Kinders*.

5. All of these areas were, of course, named with Dutch names during this period, an important part of the process of colonisation. As Paul Carter says in his discussion of the spatial history of Australia: "The historical space of the white settlers emerged through the medium of language. But the language that brought it into cultural circulation was not the language of the dictionary: on the contrary it was the language of naming, the language of travelling... Naming words were forms of spatial punctuation, transforming space into an object of knowledge, something that could be explored and read." See Paul Carter, *The Road To Botany Bay: An Exploration of*

To Simon van der Stel this initial burst of expansion beyond the skirts of Table Mountain was a necessary evil which made governmental supervision of the colonists more difficult. He was anxious to keep the freeburghers as close to Cape Town as possible in order to protect the most vulnerable of the Company's food supplies - meat.

The VOC had always obtained the bulk of its supplies of cattle and sheep from the Khoikhoi. This was because originally the Khoikhoi had been rich in livestock and could be persuaded to part with their animals in exchange for trifling quantities of tobacco, arrack or cheap trinkets.⁶ The terms of this trade favoured the Company greatly and it was determined to preserve the situation by prohibiting freeburghers from engaging in any livestock trade of their own. A *plakkaat* to this effect had been issued as early as 1652 and had, thereafter, been periodically renewed.⁷ It was feared that if the colonists were allowed untrammelled access to Khoikhoi flocks and herds not only might they push the prices up but they might also strip the Khoikhoi of their livestock altogether and destroy the source of supply. A further undesirable consequence of permitting freeburghers to enter the livestock trade would be that it would encourage private expeditions to journey into the interior where, beyond the Company's surveillance, they would doubtless indulge in acts of lawlessness. Even if the colonists did not prove to be a disruptive force (an eventuality which the authorities rightly dismissed) too great an emphasis on pastoral pursuits would jeopardise the entire settlement for, in place of a class of sedentary agriculturists, there would be created a class of roving herders, continually in search of better nourishment for their animals.⁸

Landscape and History (New York, 1988), p.67. Stellenbosch was named by Simon van der Stel, after himself, in 1679. Drakenstein was named in 1687, after the High Commissioner Hendrik Adriaan van Rhee de tot Drakenstein, and Franschhoek (part of the same district) after the French Huguenot refugees settled there in 1688. Paarl, founded in 1690, was named by Abraham Gabbema in 1657, for the great granite boulders reminded him of pearls (Dutch "paarl" = pearl). Wagenmakers Vallei (Wagon-makers Valley) was opened to white settlers in 1698 and Tjiggerberg, north of the Cape Flats, was named in 1657 after the dark, patchy vegetation on the slopes which reminded the Dutch of a leopard's spots (leopard in Dutch = "tjigger"). See P.E. Raper, *A Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp.515, 126, 166, 430, 536; E.A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 3rd edition (London, 1972), p.52.

6. The best account of this process is in Richard Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1985), pp.71-174.

7. M.K. Jeffreys, (ed.), *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part 1, 1652-1707 (Cape Town, 1944), 9 April 1652, p.4. See also pp.34, 39, 43, 44, 45, 100, 105, 143, 167, 168, 228, 282, 300, 302, 308, 326, 340.

8. See for example *plakkaat* of 19 Oct. 1691-22 Jan. 1692 in Jeffreys, (ed.), *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part 1, pp.262-264. For the gradual expansion of colonial stock-farmers into the Cape interior and Simon van der Stel's inability to prevent this see P.J. van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie* (Cape Town, 1938), pp.1-54.

True to Simon van der Stel's forebodings a group of colonists was reported to have forced one of the Company's regular suppliers of livestock, Captain Dorha of the Chainoukwa, to trade some of his cattle in 1693.⁹ Similar incidents of illegal trade with the Khoikhoi came to light in 1696 and 1697 prompting the governor to threaten transgressors with beatings, branding and banishment.¹⁰ He had already decreed that freeburghers should not graze their own livestock more than a day's journey from their farms and, in an earlier attempt to curb the expansion of the frontier, attempted to tighten up the laws regulating the granting of hunting licences.¹¹ All of these measures are an indication that even under Simon van der Stel the colony was close to bursting its borders. There is, indeed, more than a trace of bitterness in the advice which the outgoing governor gave to his son and successor in March 1699. The freeburghers, he cautioned, were nothing but lazy idlers who would indulge in illicit trade with the Khoikhoi and make insatiable demands for land unless they were closely controlled. He also warned Willem not to pay too much attention to the instructions of visiting Commissioners since they were not as well informed as the local authorities.¹² Having delivered himself of these parting shots the ex-governor retired to his farm at Constantia to observe, with impotent disapproval, the erosion of his policies.

Part of Simon van der Stel's resentment was no doubt caused by the recent visit of Commissioner Daniel Heins who, in January 1699, briefed the newly appointed governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, on the *Heren XVII's* views on the future of the colony.¹³ The *Heren* had been somewhat alarmed to learn of the harsh punishments which Willem's father had proposed for those found guilty of obtaining livestock from the Khoikhoi and drew the new governor's attention to their letter of 14 July 1695 wherein it was stated that the development of agriculture and livestock should be entrusted to the freeburghers rather than to the Company.¹⁴ The VOC's intention at this time was to attempt to strengthen the Cape both economically and strategically. In order to

9. A.J. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 1681-1707 (Cape Town 1961), 20 July 1693, pp.270-273. For the Chainouqua and Dorha, who was known to the Dutch as Claas, see Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.141-148.

10. See *plakkaat* of 19 Oct.-5 Nov. 1697 and appendix V of this *plakkaat* in Jeffreys, (ed.), *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part 1, pp.300-302; Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 4 Feb. 1696, pp.299-301; 9 Feb. 1696, p.301; 19 Oct. 1697, pp.319-320.

11. For grazing regulations see *plakkaat* of 19 Oct. 1691-22 Jan. 1692 in Jeffreys, (ed.), *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part 1, pp.262-264. For hunting regulations, which stipulated that game could only be hunted under licence between January and July see *plakkaat* of 20 July-23 Aug. 1690 in Jeffreys, (ed.), *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part 1, pp.256-257.

12. A.J. Boeseken, (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse Argiefstukke: Belangrike Kaapse Dokumente, Memorien en Instructien*, Vol. 1, 1657-1699 (Cape Town, 1966), 1 March 1699, pp.229-257.

13. Anna Boeseken and Margaret Cairns, *The Secluded Valley: Tulbagh: 't Land Van Waveren, 1700-1804* (Cape Town, 1989), p.18.

14. Dan Sleigh, "Die Buiteposte Van Die VOC Aan Die Grens Van Die Kaapse Nedersetting (1652-1707)" (unpublished M.A., Stellenbosch University, 1982), p.24.

achieve this goal there had to be an increase in the population of colonial cultivators and the Company was therefore offering immigrants free transportation to the Cape and free land once they arrived there. If production could be stimulated supplies of food could be guaranteed. The meat supply in particular had been a cause of concern since it was, to a large degree, dependent on Khoikhoi producers. Ultimately, it was hoped, the colonists themselves would be able to supply the Company's meat requirements and, as an incentive, the freeburghers were to be allowed to participate in the livestock trade.¹⁵

This latter concession was to have disastrous consequences for the Khoikhoi although, to an extent, they were granted a temporary reprieve by Willem Adriaan's refusal to implement the instructions immediately.¹⁶ Even without the opening of the livestock trade, however, the Khoikhoi groups closest to the colonial settlement had been severely disrupted by their exposure to Company, as well as illegal, trading parties. Simon van der Stel had despatched over forty livestock trading expeditions during his period of office and the increasing unwillingness and inability of the Khoikhoi to furnish such parties with livestock was an indication that they had already been over exploited.¹⁷ As early as the 1680s Simon van der Stel was finding it difficult to meet the Company's annual consumption requirement of between 3 000 and 4 000 sheep. His response to this challenge had been threefold. Firstly he concentrated on building up the Company's own holdings of cattle and sheep in an attempt to make the Company self-sufficient. These ranching activities were carried out at a variety of Company posts scattered throughout the colony on the best available land. Secondly, as we have seen, he clamped down hard on illegal competitors who were jeopardising the livestock trade with the Khoikhoi. Thirdly, he redoubled his efforts to obtain cattle and sheep from indigenous suppliers, applying methods of procurement which were as destructive as any employed by the freeburghers. In 1693 for instance, when Captain Dorha refused to supply the Company with any more of his livestock, the governor authorised an attack on his kraal by a combined force of 200 soldiers and freeburghers. Dorha was captured, some of his followers killed and virtually all of his cattle and sheep stolen.¹⁸

15. Ibid. Also M.F. Katzen, "White Settlers And The Origin Of A New Society, 1652-1778", in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson,(eds.), *The Oxford History Of South Africa*, Vol.1 (Oxford, 1969), pp.192-198.

16. Willem Adriaan van der Stel only obeyed these orders thirteen months later.

17. See Sleigh, "Die Buiteposte Van Die VOC", pp.43-46 for a list of Company livestock trading expeditions between 1679-1705.

18. For the Company's efforts to ensure the meat supply see Sleigh, "Die Buiteposte Van Die VOC" pp.17-72. See also Dan Sleigh, "Die Buiteposte In Die Ekonomie Van Die Kaapse Verversingstasie, 1652-1795" (unpublished Ph.D., Stellenbosch University, 1987). The fate of Dorha is dealt with by Sleigh in "Die Buiteposte Van Die VOC", pp.53-65 and by Elphick in *Khoikhoi*, pp.141-148.

Willem Adriaan van der Stel's reluctance to open the cattle trade may thus partially be explained by his belief that his father's methods of procurement were the best. His behaviour was probably also influenced by the growing realisation that he was extraordinarily well placed to benefit from his position as governor of the Cape. Thanks to the labours of his father he inherited a ready-made network of power and influence, including valuable information about local conditions. Simon van der Stel had demonstrated, albeit on a public scale, that farming at the Cape could be a productive business. His son was to demonstrate that similar success need not be beyond the reach of individuals acting in a private capacity.

It is not the intention of this study to reconvene the trial of Willem Adriaan van der Stel but it is necessary to examine such evidence as has a bearing on the development of the northern Cape frontier zone.¹⁹ Company servants were not supposed to be private farmers but this was a regulation which had never been strictly observed. By 1700 Willem Adriaan had acquired Vergeleegen, a 613 morgen farm in Hottentots Holland, whilst his father farmed 891 morgen at Constantia. With brother Frans farming a further 240 morgen the Van der Stels were the greatest landholders in the colony. The governor's cronies were also rewarded with grants of land so that by 1705 the Van der Stels and the seven or eight chief officials at the Cape owned enough cultivated land to supply the Cape market with all its agricultural requirements. Nor did they forbear from so doing. Abusing his authority as governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel enforced the Company's exclusive right to buy and sell produce to passing ships in such a way as to benefit favoured suppliers, like himself. He was also able to utilise a workforce of 60 Company servants and 300 slaves (100 of whom belonged to the Company) for his own purposes. Beyond the Hottentots Holland Mountains, in the present district of Caledon, the governor had exclusive grazing rights and pastured some 1 800 sheep and 1 000 cattle at eighteen out-stations which, nominally belonged to the Company. In 1705-1706, when the gross yield of wheat for the colony was 4 331 muids, the governor alone was reaping over 1 100 muids. He also had over half a million wine-stocks under cultivation which, at that time, represented about one quarter of the total figure for the colony.²⁰

Clearly, the governor was doing a great deal to stimulate agriculture, but nothing to encourage the productive potential of the freeburghers since he was depriving them of a market. A paradoxical result of this policy was that the colony now began to expand at an irreversible and

19. The best account of this debate is in Fouché, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, pp.156-185. See also Gerrit Schutte, "Company and colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795, in Elphick and Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*, pp.303-307.

20. These details are from Fouché, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, and from Schutte, "Company and colonists".

unprecedented rate and a class of semi-nomadic colonial pastoralists - the *trekboers* - developed.²¹ The traditional explanation for this has been that the eighteenth century Cape economy was so backward and impoverished, crippled by a combination of mercantilism, monopolistic restrictions, over-production, corruption and a limited market that colonial farmers were, by necessity, forced into becoming *trekboers* in the interior.²² Despite the challenge which this interpretation has received (following Neumark's contention that the *trekboers* were drawn deeper into the interior by commercial opportunities)²³ and a great deal of subsequent research on the Cape economy²⁴ the traditional interpretation remains an accurate description of the crucially formative period of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's rule and the influence which these unfavourable economic circumstances had on frontier expansion should not be underestimated.

But Willem Adriaan van der Stel also took more positive measures to promote frontier expansion for, on 31 July 1700, the first steps were taken to settle colonists in the Land van Waveren (the Tulbagh basin).²⁵ By granting farms and issuing grazing licences beyond the Berg River the

21. See S.D. Neumark, *Economic Influences On The South African Frontier, 1652-1836* (Stanford, 1957); L.T. Guelke, "The Early European Settlement of South Africa" (unpublished Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1974); L. Guelke, "Frontier Settlement in Early Dutch South Africa", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, March, 1976, Vol. 66, No.2, pp.25-42; L. Guelke, "Freehold farmers and frontier settlers"; Robert Ross, "Capitalism, Expansion and Incorporation on the Southern African Frontier", in H. Lamar and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (Yale, 1981); P. van Duin and R. Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1987), pp.58-80.

22. A useful survey of the traditional interpretation of the eighteenth century Cape economy is to be found in Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape*, pp.1-7. The clearest summaries of the traditional interpretation are to be found in C.W. de Kiewiet, *A History Of South Africa: Social And Economic* (Oxford, 1941) and in T.R.H. Davenport, "The Consolidation of a New Society: The Cape Colony", in M. Wilson and L. Thompson, *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1. Those historians who first linked *trekboer* expansion to the limited economic opportunities provided by the Cape market were A.J.H. van der Walt, *Die Ausdehnung de Kolonie am Kaap der Guten Hoffnung (1700-1799)* (Berlin, 1928); L. Fouché, *Die Evolutie van die Trekboer* (Pretoria, 1909); and P. J. van der Merwe in his great *trekboer* trilogy, *Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek (1770-1842)* (The Hague, 1937); *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie, 1657-1842* (Cape Town 1938) and *Trek: Studies Oor die Mobiliteit van die Pioniersbevolking aan die Kaap* (Cape Town, 1945).

23. Neumark, *Economic Influences*.

24. Other important reassessments of the eighteenth century Cape economy, apart from those cited in note 21 above, are L. Guelke and R. Shell, "An Early Colonial Landed Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony (1652-1731)", *Journal of Historical Geography*, IX, 1983; and R. Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, 1983.

25. Cape Archives (hereafter CA), Verbatim Copy (hereafter VC) 15, Journal, 1699-1701, 31 July 1700, p.764; CA Leibbrandt's Précis (hereafter LM) 10, Council of Policy, Letters Despatched, 16 Oct. 1700, pp.1066-1067. The "Land van Waveren" was named after an estate along the banks of the River Waver, south of Amsterdam, which belonged to relatives of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's mother. See Boeseken and Cairns, *The Secluded Valley*, pp.17-24 for the naming of the valley. The area was also known by its earlier name, "Roodezand", (red sand), from the red sandstone of the mountain pass into the valley. The modern pass is to the south of the old one. In 1804 the Batavian government proclaimed a new magisterial district centred on the area and renamed it Tulbagh after the popular governor of the Cape between 1751 and 1771, Ryk Tulbagh.

governor was virtually ensuring that the settlers of these regions would occupy themselves primarily with pastoral production instead of the mixed agricultural production of the south-western Cape. This was partly due to climatic reasons, since the south-western Cape was better watered, but also due to the distance of Waveren from the Cape Town market. Limited though this market was it was still the only outlet for agricultural produce and the focal point of the settlement. It has been estimated that in the first decade of the eighteenth century there were 1 000 people living in Cape Town, and that they, at least, constituted a significant internal market.²⁶ The further away from Cape Town a farmer was, however, the more difficult and uneconomical it became to transport agricultural produce to market. Meat, though, could walk to the market and pastoral production had the additional advantage of proffering a high degree of self-sufficiency for an initially low capital outlay.²⁷ A further incentive for stock-farmers was that Willem Adriaan van der Stel eventually heeded the *Heren XVII*'s instructions and in February 1700 opened the cattle trade with the Khoikhoi to the colonists.²⁸ This had an immediate impact on the Khoisan. Faced by significant new land losses and the intensified appropriation of their livestock the Khoisan groups of the western Cape fought back.

KHOISAN RESISTANCE, 1700-1708

The Khoisan resistance sparked off by the invasion of Waveren and the opening of the livestock trade was as extensive as the two Khoikhoi-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century. Indeed Elphick argues that had the Dutch been able to establish the identity of their adversaries they would have called the hostilities a war.²⁹ Who were the resisters? When Willem Adriaan van der Stel had first surveyed the valley to which he gave the name "'t Land van Waveren" he reported that, "in this entire region, so far as we have been able to notice, there are few or no Hottentots to be found".³⁰ The seemingly fortuitous absence of Khoikhoi from a region eminently suitable for pastoralism has to be explained, for the governor's observation cannot simply be dismissed as wishful thinking. One possibility is that the Khoikhoi residents of the Land van Waveren might have hidden themselves from the governor's expedition, fearing that it was yet another trading or

26. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape*, p.10.

27. See Ross, "Capitalism, Expansion and Incorporation" and N.G. Penn, "Pastoralists and Pastoralism in the Northern Cape Frontier Zone During the Eighteenth Century", in Martin Hall and Andrew B. Smith (eds.), *Prehistoric Pastoralism in Southern Africa: The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, Vol. 5, June 1986, p.63.

28. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 17 Feb. 1700, pp.364-365; CA, VC 15, 17 Feb. 1700, pp.609-610.

29. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.225.

30. Boeseken and Cairns, *The Secluded Valley*, p.19.

raiding party. But this mysterious scarcity of Khoikhoi in the Tulbagh basin in November 1699 may have other, more fundamental explanations.

During the seventeenth century the most significant northerly group of Khoikhoi, contiguous to the colony, were the Cochoqua. They occupied an area roughly north of the Cape Flats and south and west of the Berg River.³¹ On occasions, however, they were to be found as far north as the Olifants River. If any Khoikhoi were accustomed to living in the Tulbagh basin they were likely to be the Cochoqua. Being pastoralists they were obliged to move their flocks and herds on a seasonal basis so as to maximise the exploitation of available environmental resources. Of prime importance here were the resources of grazing and water, both of which varied in quality and quantity according to the time of the year. The central point in the Cochoqua's orbit of transhumance was probably the area around present day Mamre, where the Malmesbury shale soils and well watered hills combined to create good, all-year-round grazing conditions. A.B. Smith has speculated that in the hot, dry Cape summers the Cochoqua moved south to exploit the occasional summer rainfall and better pastures of the Malmesbury, Tjiggerberg and Table Bay areas.³² If these proved to be inadequate (or too keenly contested by the Peninsular Khoikhoi) the Cochoqua could always rely on the constant waters of the Berg River, along whose banks they could roam whilst grazing their stock on the choice pasture of the Swartland (also underlain by Malmesbury shale soil). By the onset of winter, between April and September, the Cochoqua were often to be found on the Vredenberg Peninsular or in the hinterland of Saldanha Bay. It is thus quite clear that the absence of Khoikhoi in the Tulbagh basin in November 1699 might have been connected to the cycle of transhumance favoured by the Cochoqua. According to Smith the Cochoqua were most likely to have been in the vicinity between January and April.³³ More important than the exact timing of such an occurrence, however, is the broader point: that the absence of figures in a landscape did not signify that the area was unoccupied or unutilised.

31. For details concerning the Cochoqua see I. Shapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (London, 1930), p.45.; H.J. le Roux, "Die Toestand, Verspreiding en Verbrokkeling van die Hottentot stamme in Suid-Afrika, 1653-1713" (unpublished M.A., Stellenbosch University, 1945) and R. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.117-137. The Dutch sometimes referred to them as the "Gonnemans" (after one of their leaders, Gonnema) or the "Koekemans" and "Kogmans". Nienaber speculates that in Simon van der Stel's time they began to trek to the present day Montagu area (where Cognanskloof and Cognans River are to be found) and eventually ended up as Great Koranas of the "Nouwange" or "Smalwange" sub-group (their name means "narrow cheeked") at the Orange River in the 1770s. See G.S. Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname* (Pretoria, 1989), pp.265-274. See chapter 8 in this thesis for a discussion of Korana origins.

32. A.B. Smith, "Prehistoric pastoralism in the South-western Cape, South Africa", *World Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No.1, June 1983, pp.79-89.

33. *Ibid.*, pp.84-5.

But other reasons for the apparently uninhabited state of the Land van Waveren on the eve of its colonisation also have to be considered. By 1700 the Khoikhoi groups of the south-western Cape had already been seriously disrupted by their exposure to nearly half a century of colonial settlement and over two centuries of contact with Europeans. The disastrous effects of this interaction were first experienced by the Peninsular Khoikhoi (the Goringhaiqua and the Gorachouqua) but, after the first Khoikhoi-Dutch war (1659-1660), the Cochoqua found themselves to be in the direct path of colonial expansion.³⁴ At first the Cochoqua benefited from the demise of their ancient rivals, the Peninsulars, and enjoyed the opportunities which they now had to trade directly with the Company. By 1670, however, there were signs that the relationship between the Cochoqua and the Dutch was deteriorating. The breaking point occurred in 1673 when a group of Dutch hippopotamus hunters was killed by some San who were allegedly under the authority of Gonnema, a Cochoqua leader. The massive campaign of retaliation, launched by the Dutch and abetted by Gonnema's Khoisan enemies, became known as the second Khoikhoi-Dutch war (1673-1677). Its upshot was that the Cochoqua lost at least 1 765 cattle and 4 930 sheep. This economic disaster was accompanied by political and social disintegration as the Cochoqua, shattered by defeat, became subservient underlings of the Dutch. Gonnema died in 1685 and Oedasoia, leader of another section of the Cochoqua, died in 1689. Their deaths left their people disunited and accelerated the fragmentation of the Cochoqua into enfeebled sub-groupings at the mercy, alike, of the Company, colonists and antagonistic Khoisan.³⁵ It should not, therefore, be surprising that by 1700 the Cochoqua were quite thin on the ground in the Tulbagh district.

Despite this fact Willem Adriaan van der Stel took the precaution of despatching one corporal and seven soldiers to protect the first settlers in the Land van Waveren³⁶ for even though the Cochoqua were no longer a threat they were not the only Khoisan in the area. It was well known that the high mountains to the east of the Berg River were the home of a troublesome people known as the Ubiqua.³⁷ The Ubiqua were a specific group of hunter-gatherers who had earned a fearsome reputation as stealers of livestock amongst the Khoikhoi pastoralists long before the Dutch arrived at the Cape. It seems that they had perfected the art of driving off the cattle of their neighbours, making the eminently practical transition from being hunters of game to hunters of

34. For details see Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.110-116.

35. These events are described in Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.117-137.

36. CA, VC 15, 31 July 1700, p.764. See also Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, pp.22-24.

37. See Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.759-767 for a discussion of the meaning of the word "Ubiqua" which, he argues, refers specifically to "hunters of livestock" rather than hunters of game". See also Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.24-26.

livestock and enjoying near invulnerability in their mountain retreats. Encircled as it was by mountains the Land van Waveren was pre-eminently Ubiqua territory - another reason for the scarcity of Cochoqua in the area - and was indeed referred to by the colonists (though not, presumably, in the governor's hearing) as Ubiqualand.³⁸ It was thus hardly surprising that the first Khoisan response to the colonial settlement of the area came from the Ubiqua.

On 13 March 1701 Michiel Ditmar, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, reported that the "Ubiquase Hottentots" had come over the "Land van Waveren" and Roodezand to Riebeek-Kasteel and attacked the post of a certain freeburgher called Gerrit Cloeten.³⁹ They stole forty of his cattle and threatened, firstly, to impoverish the farmers and, secondly, to attack the Company's post. Cloeten's sheep were driven away by the robbers who wounded the shepherd with four or five arrows. Fortunately Cloeten's son and his *knecht* had managed to recover the sheep but prospects for the future did not look promising. For some reason the governor and the Council of Policy were amazed at these developments and thought that the aggressors were more likely to be the "Grigriquase" (Guriqua) or those under Captain "Portugies". They immediately ordered the despatch of ten Company soldiers with reinforcements, to the number of thirty, to be drawn from the ranks of the freeburghers. Their instructions were to proceed to Roodezand and, under the leadership of the *landdrost*, capture the robbers and recover the cattle. If they met with any resistance they were authorised to kill. In the meantime Cloeten's son and his *knecht* were ordered to appear before the governor to answer some questions.⁴⁰

None of these measures appears to have clarified matters or contributed towards preventing further attacks for, on 7 April, the colonists at Waveren reported that the "Hottentots genaamt de Grigriquase en Namacquase" had stolen eight of the Company's cattle.⁴¹ A few days later the same group (or so it was thought) stole 100 sheep from the old post of Gerrit Cloeten and the governor once more ordered a large contingent of soldiers and freeburghers to Waveren.⁴²

38. The mountains above Wellington are called the Ubiqua Mountains to this day.

39. CA, VC 15, 13 March 1701, pp.895-902; CA, LM 10, 13 March 1701, pp.56-57.

40. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 13 March 1701, pp.380-381. This was not the first time that Cloeten had fought with the Ubiqua over cattle. In 1686 he and some other freeburghers had captured thirty oxen from them which they regarded as spoils of war citing the Ubiqua's aggression in 1673, 1676, 1679 and 1684 as justification for keeping the booty. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1686, p.148. See also "Extracts from Journal", 2 Nov. 1686, in D. Moodie, (ed.), *The Record: or a series of official papers relative to the conditions and treatment of the native tribes of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1838, 1842; Amsterdam and Cape Town, 1960, 1966), Part 1, pp.413-414. "Captain Portugies" was the name the Dutch gave to the "Chief" of the Grigriqua. See "Extracts from Journal", 18 Feb. and 1 March 1687, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part 1, p.415.

41. "Hottentots named the Grigriqua and Namaqua", CA, VC 15, 7 April 1701, p.924.

42. CA, VC 15, 10 April 1701, p.925; 14 April 1701, pp.927-28.

Shortly before their arrival, however, the Company's post at Waveren was attacked for a second time and eleven cattle were stolen.⁴³ Once the commando arrived it was unable to make contact with the robbers and, after a fruitless search for the captured livestock, disbanded.⁴⁴ Only five days after the soldiers had returned to the Castle, on 16 May, a "diverse unknown nation of Hottentots" struck again, this time at the Company's post at the Berg River. The cowherd, Casper Multingh, had been driving the cattle back to the post in the evening when a group of Khoikhoi sprang out of the long grass where they had been hiding and proceeded to drive off the herd with great fury. Multingh fired his musket and thereby provoked eight Khoikhoi, armed with assegais, into confronting him. Fortunately for the Dutchman his companions from the post came to the rescue but the assailants made off with 145 cattle. Despite the fact that they were pursued nearly all night they got away with all but eight of the animals, thanks to the arrival of reinforcements from a second group of Khoikhoi.⁴⁵

Governor Van der Stel was still frustrated by his inability to identify the people responsible for these attacks. It was clear, however, that if they were allowed to continue their robberies with impunity the far flung settlers of the northern frontier would be at risk. He therefore resolved to reinforce the posts of Waveren and the Berg river with additional soldiers and to create a new post nearby or in between the others. The posts were to be well provided with horses so that, whoever the marauders were, they could be pursued more successfully in the future. Though the governor was fairly sure that the Peninsular and Cochoqua Khoikhoi were not involved in the attacks (the "Caabse en Gonnemanse Hottentots") he summoned their captains to the Castle in order to try to establish who the "evilly disposed Hottentots" were.⁴⁶ Their answer deserves a careful consideration for it does more than help us to identify the resisters of 1701. It also provides us with a clue as to the nature of those people whom the colonists were, increasingly, to call "Bosjesmans". According to Van der Stel's informants the attackers were:

Bosjesmans of struikroovers, bestaande meest uijt de voorsz Grigriquase en Namaquase, synde natien dewelke van de roov gewoon syn te leeven, en haar op de gebergten onthouden, en met dewelke d' E' Compagnie nooijt eenige vriendschap of handelinghe heeft gehad.⁴⁷

43. CA, VC 15, 29 April 1701, p.933.

44. CA, VC 15, 16 May 1701, p.938.

45. CA, VC 15, 26 May 1701, pp.941-943; Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 26 May 1701, pp.382-83.

46. CA, VC 15, 26 May 1701, pp.944-45.

47. "Bushmen or highwaymen, consisting mainly of the aforesaid Grigriqua and Namaqua, which nations are accustomed to living from robbery, and live in the mountains, and with whom the honourable Company has never had any business or friendship..." CA, VC 15, 16 June 1701, p.952.

The Ubiqua were not named but this does not mean that they were innocent. The evidence suggests that there was a widespread attack on the colonists by several of the groups of the northern borderlands, and that the Cochoqua and Peninsulars, for reasons of their own, sought to emphasise the role of certain participants rather than others. By singling out Grigriqua and Namaqua "Bushmen" the Cochoqua were probably identifying enemies who had caused them a great deal of harm in the recent past. The Grigriqua⁴⁸ were the Khoikhoi group who lived north of the northern loop of the Berg River and south of the Knersvlakte.⁴⁹ To the west they occupied the Sandveld⁵⁰ and Piketberg⁵¹ regions and to the east were found in the vicinity of the Koue Bokkeveld⁵² and the Cedarberg.⁵³ In the seventeenth century a minor off-shoot of the Grigriqua - the Chariguriqua⁵⁴ - had lived south of the Berg River in the vicinity of Saldanha Bay and in close proximity to the Cochoqua. By 1700, however, the Chariguriqua had largely disappeared and the Grigriqua were themselves under intense pressure. They had, it is true, never been a particularly strong or impressive group. Sandwiched between the powerful Namaqua to the north and the Cochoqua to the south they had been obliged to accept the suzerainty of first one and then the other of their neighbours. Their territory was, for the most part, arid and mountainous which

48. Elphick refers to the Grigriqua as the Guriqua (see *Khoikhoi*, pp.44-45) but I have preferred to follow Nienaber's usage following his discussion of the name in *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.443-448.

49. The Knersvlakte (Afrikaans for "gnashing flats") is the arid region between the Olifants River in the south and the Kaniesberg in the north. Its name evokes the hardship experienced by travellers and their animals crossing the waterless landscape. See Raper, *Place Names*, p.266. The region was sometimes referred to as the "Knechtsvlakte" in the eighteenth century, perhaps because its unattractive features made it undesirable to a more exalted class of colonists.

50. The Sandveld is the dry, sandy region bounded by the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Berg River in the south, the Olifants River in the north and the Olifants River Mountains in the east.

51. The Piketberg is 135 kilometres north-northeast of Cape Town. "So called, because at the time when Mr. Gotske was at war with the Gongemans they set up pickets there, and made merry." This is the explanation of the journal-keeper of Simon van der Stel in 1685. Isbrand Gotske was governor from 1672 to 1676, i.e., during the second Khoikhoi-Dutch war. The "Gongemans" were the Khoikhoi of Gonnema, i.e., the Cochoqua. See Moodie, *The Record*, Part 1, p.401.

52. In the eighteenth century the name "Bokkeveld" was given to the entire mountainous district extending to the present day Ceres Valley in the south (the Warm Bokkeveld) to the high escarpment between the Knersvlakte and the Hantam in the north (the Onder Bokkeveld). The name derived from the scattered herds of springbok (*capra pygargus*) which were found there and, in certain years, migrated thither "from the more remote tracts of the continent in astonishing numbers". See V.S. Forbes, (ed.), *Carl Peter Thunberg Travels At The Cape Of Good Hope 1772-1775* (Cape Town, 1986), p.197. The Koue Bokkeveld is the cold high-lying district above Ceres and south of Elandsloof.

53. The Cedarberg form the central and highest ranges of the Bokkeveld Mountains, north of the Koue Bokkeveld and south of the Onder Bokkeveld. They are named after the tree *widdringtonia cedarbergensis*, once abundant in the mountains, and highly prized as a source of timber. For an indication that some of the under-classes of the eighteenth century Cape called the mountains "Suurberg" see my article "Droster Gangs of the Bokkeveld and Roggeveld, 1770-1800", *South African Historical Journal*, 1990, No.23, p.21.

54. The name "Chariguriqua" means "Little Guriqua" or "Little Grigriqua". See Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.242-248 and pp.xxviii-xxix.

made the accumulation of livestock difficult. It has even been suggested that the original Grigriqua were Strandloopers or San who had acquired livestock but, in the eyes of their neighbours, retained their status as hunter-gatherers.⁵⁵ If this is true it would help to explain why the Cochoqua referred to the Grigriqua as "Bosjesmans" but it is far more likely that the Grigriqua, like the Namaqua, were Khoikhoi who had San clients.⁵⁶ In fact, the Grigriqua were themselves clients (or second class allies) of the Namaqua.⁵⁷ It was this alliance, together with its San auxiliaries, which had attacked the Cochoqua in 1686.⁵⁸ No doubt the increasing disruption of these frontier societies, especially following the burst of colonial expansion in 1700, had re-kindled the old enmities.

The military leader of the Cochoqua in 1701 was a certain Captain Kees whose kraal was at the Groene Kloof. Some of his followers had already had their livestock stolen by Khoisan raiders and Van der Stel therefore sought to encourage the Cochoqua to repel the robbers. Gifts of tobacco, arrack and rice were dispensed to Kees and his under-captains in an attempt to stiffen their resolve whilst a punitive expedition, including both Company men and Khoikhoi, was planned against the common enemy. A new post was also to be established between Riebeeck-Kasteel and the Heuningberg and it was hoped that both the Cochoqua and the Peninsular Khoikhoi would establish their kraals nearby in order that all might benefit from mutual protection.⁵⁹

Unfortunately neither Captain Kees nor Gerrit Cloeten could wait to avenge themselves and on 20 June word reached the governor that the two men had joined forces and gone in search of their foes. Since Cloeten had acted without permission the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch was ordered to arrest him.⁶⁰ Though no prosecution resulted from this incident the authorities clearly

55. Elphick notes that: "The Guriqua differed from most other Khoikhoi groups in that the Dutch found no chief among them who exercised any authority, even nominal, beyond his own kraal ... it is probable that the Guriqua were once a united tribe, which later split into Greater and Lesser segments ... Dr. Shula Marks has plausibly suggested that the original Guriqua may have been a Strandlooper group which acquired livestock: this theory would explain their name (Sea People), their comparative poverty, their political decentralisation, and the fact that other Khoikhoi occasionally identified them as 'San'." Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.135. See also Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.443-448, 242-248, 432-443.

56. See Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.32-37 for evidence that Khoikhoi groups had San auxiliaries.

57. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.119-121. For the Namaqua see pp.281-288 below.

58. See "Extracts from Journal", 27 May 1686 and 13 July 1686, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part 1, p.413; Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.447-448; Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.135, 137.

59. CA, VC 15, 16 June 1701, pp.951-953. Riebeeck-Kasteel lies twenty-one kilometres north-east of present day Malmesbury and is 914 metres high. It was named in honour of Jan van Riebeeck on 3 February 1661 by Pieter Cruythoff. Raper, *Place Names*, p.466. The Heuningberg lies thirty kilometres north of the Berg River.

60. CA, VC 15, 20 June 1701, p.955; CA, LM 10, 20 June 1701. On this occasion Captain Kees was described as living at or behind the Paardeberg. This mountain (now called Perdeberg) is sixteen kilometres south-east of

disapproved of colonists taking the law into their own hands and abrogating the Company's monopoly of violence. Cloeten's actions may, however, be regarded as the precursor of many hundreds of similar responses, occurring throughout the eighteenth century, when individual *trekboers* would organise unofficial commandos. What probably saved Cloeten from punishment in 1701 was the government's greater concern to strike back at the Khoisan raiders and on 26 August there was some heartening news.

Daniel Taus, the corporal of the post at Riebeeck-Kasteel, reported that he and his men had intercepted a group of "Sanquase Hottentots"⁶¹ four days before whilst they had been engaged in driving away a herd of 120 cattle belonging to the Khoikhoi captains "Doggesmeester" and "Chineesje". There had also been some cattle of the freeburgher Pieter van der Heijssen amongst them. The Company men gave chase on their horses and succeeded in recovering the livestock. They also killed four or five of the robbers and continued their pursuit of the survivors the next day. Though no further casualties were inflicted the governor hoped that this would teach the "soo genaamde bosjesmans" a salutary lesson and that in future the colonists would be left in peace and quiet.⁶²

This minor colonial success did not mean that the earlier plans of retaliation against the Grigriqua were abandoned. On 20 September a force of at least thirty-five men, under the command of Ambrosius Sasse, set off for the Olifants River⁶³ with the intention of trying to recover the cattle

present day Malmesbury and named after the zebras and quaggas that used to graze there. Thunberg reports that the government was attempting to protect zebras at Paardeberg as late as the 1770s. Forbes, *Thunberg*, p.276. It is interesting to speculate whether Captain Kees was the same person whom the Khoikhoi of Langevlei knew as Kees Oorlam. Someone of that name was described by Starrenburg as having been with the freemen Pieter Janszoon, Potje and Karos op Zy on an ivory bartering expedition to the Verlorevlei district in the summer of 1704-1705. Since "Oorlam", "Potje" and "Karos op Zy" are not typical freeburgher names they might have been Khoikhoi members of a colonial hunting party, the name "Oorlam" here signifying that Kees had acquired many of the trappings of colonial culture. E.H. Raidt, (ed.), *Francois Valentyn: Description of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it* (Amsterdam, 1726; Cape Town, 1973), Part 2, pp.26-27.

61. CA, VC 15, 26 Aug. 1701, p.979. The "Sanquase" were obviously San for this was one of the variants of the name by which the hunter-gatherers of the south-western Cape were known. "Soaqua" and "Sonqua" were others. See Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.842-852. See also J.E. Parkinson, "Soaqua: hunter-fisher-gatherers of the Olifants River, Western Cape", *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 32, 1977.

62. CA, VC 15, 26 Aug. 1701, p.979.

63. The Olifants River was known to the Khoikhoi as the Tharakkama (meaning rough or bushy banked river) and was given its Dutch name by Jan Danckert in 1660. Danckert was on an expedition (or so he thought) to Monomotopa when he and his companions reached the river a month after leaving Cape Town. They saw 200 to 300 elephants together here, hence its name. G.S. Nienaber and P.E. Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica*, A** (Pretoria, 1977), pp.1024-1025; "Extracts of a Journal of the last expedition to Monomotopa", 8 Nov. 1660, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part 1, p.228.

which had been stolen from the Company's Berg River post in May. The soldiers were also on the lookout for Captain Portugies, who was still suspected of being involved in the robberies.⁶⁴ Sasse's expedition did not get as far as the Olifants River for it came across the tracks of some "quade g'intentioneerde Hottentots"⁶⁵ near the Bokkenberg.⁶⁶ The Dutch followed the spoor to behind the Piketberg and over the Zeekoeijvalley⁶⁷ until the entrance to a big kloof. Only one man at a time could enter the narrow opening of the kloof but since the hostile Khoisan were disputing access to the passage, by shooting arrows and hurling assegais from behind the surrounding rocks, nobody was inclined to try. Sasse ordered some of his men to provide a covering fire whilst others attempted to outflank the enemy by climbing above them. During this manoeuvre the commander received an arrow through his hat whilst the Khoisan simply retreated to another height and the protection of some huge rocks. Night fell on a situation of stalemate. Next morning Sasse attempted to parley with the Khoisan but to no avail. Given the difficulty of the terrain and the need to preserve his own forces he decided to return to the Cape with a meagre booty of eight cattle, only one of which belonged to the Company.⁶⁸

The expedition against the Grigiqua had not therefore been an unqualified success. To make matters worse, whilst Sasse and his men had been trudging across the Swartland, there had been another Khoisan raid, this time a mere fourteen or fifteen hours journey from the Castle. On 7 October a group of about 300 Khoisan had swooped on the herds of Henning Huising at Groenekloof and made off with 200 cattle. Huising and his servants had given chase and shot three of the robbers without, however, recovering any livestock.⁶⁹ This was a serious matter because, on 17 February 1700, Huising had been awarded the contract to supply the Company with meat for the next ten years.⁷⁰ Huising, the wealthiest freeburgher at the Cape, had been granted this privilege as part of the *Heren XVII's* plan to encourage the settlers to provision the Company. Since W.A. van der Stel and Huising were, at this stage, close friends this arrangement did not conflict with the governor's interests.⁷¹ Huising had been granted a massive tract of land

64. CA, VC 15, 20 Sept. 1701, pp.997-998.

65. CA, VC 15, 25 Oct. 1701, pp.1017-1019. "Quade g'intentioneerde Hottentots" is usually translated as "evilily disposed Hottentots". It is remarkable that the disposition of the people concerned could be ascertained from their tracks alone.

66. The exact locality of the Bokkenberg is unknown.

67. The Zeekoeijvalleij (hippopotamus valley) was an earlier name for the Verlore Valleij or Verlore Vlei (lost or desolate vlei). The latter name came into usage about 1724. Before this the Khoikhoi knew the Vlei as the Quaecoma which, possibly, means "Seekoeirivier". Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica*, A**, p.991.

68. CA, VC 15, 25 Oct. 1701, pp.1017-1011.

69. CA, VC 15, 7 Oct. 1701, pp.1010-1011.

70. CA, VC 15, 17 Feb. 1700, pp.605-608; Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 17 Feb. 1700, p.364.

71. Fouché, (ed.), *Diary of Adam Tas*, pp.104-105, n.1; p.201.

at Groenekloof (from Driefontein in the south, the sea in the west, Saldanha Bay in the north and Dassenberg in the east) to enable him to fulfil his obligations and he had also been promised Company assistance if he were ever attacked by Khoisan. On 8 November the governor - who expected repayment for his favours - therefore established a new post at Groenekloof with ten Company men in attendance to protect Huising.⁷²

Two weeks later there was another Khoisan raid on the livestock of the Company and colonists at Waveren. The post holder, Sergeant Godfried Donderstad, identified the attackers as members of the "Koekemanse natie" i.e., the Cochoqua.⁷³ This meant that virtually every Khoisan group in the frontier zone was implicated in the attacks of 1701 and it is an indication of the extent of the repercussions of colonial expansion. In this particular raid forty cattle were driven away by twelve Khoikhoi after they had forced the herder to retreat. The sergeant, with various Company men and freeburghers, hurried to the rescue but, for some reason, could only muster one suitable horse. This horse, ridden by a certain Jurgen Arend, soon became exhausted in attempts to drive the cattle back and it became evident that the Khoikhoi would escape with the cattle. A French freeburgher, Etienne Terblanche, who had twenty of his cattle amongst the stolen herd, urged Arend to keep on trying. Encouraged by the fact that one of the Khoikhoi had been killed, the two colonists pursued the robbers into the mountains. There, however, Arend was stabbed in the chest with an assegai and beaten to death with kierries. Fearful for his own life Terblanche retreated, leaving his cattle and his companion to the Khoikhoi.⁷⁴

Only two days later, on 25 November, "de rebellige Hottentots of soo genaamde bosjesmans"⁷⁵ launched a massive raid on the herds of those Khoikhoi who had taken up the Company's offer to graze their cattle close to the protection of the Riebeck-Kasteel post. These Khoikhoi, mainly Cochoqua, included Captains Kees, Koopman and "de Klijne capitein", proof that not all of the Cochoqua had joined the raiders. Some 274 of their cattle were stolen by over 100 San but, thanks to the exemplary action of Corporal Daniel Dede the post holder, all but one animal was recovered. Dede and his men had pursued the robbers as far as Vier en Twintig Rivieren and until eleven o'clock at night. Unlike the post at Waveren they had good horses and this seems to have made the difference. The San escaped over the high mountains behind the Land van

72. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 17 Feb. 1700, pp.365-366; CA, VC 15, 8 Nov. 1701, p.133.

73. CA, VC 15, 27 Nov. 1701, p.1033.

74. CA, VC 15, 27 Nov. 1701, pp.1033-1036.

75. "rebellious Hottentots or so-called bushmen".

Waveren but Captain Kees and his followers were reunited with their stock.⁷⁶ It may have been that they had been singled out as a target because they were collaborating with the Dutch; but equally they may have been robbed simply because they had cattle. Whatever the reasons were, however, raids on Khoikhoi groups under colonial protection continued in the new year for on 17 January 1702 the "Caapse Hottentotse Capitains Jan Pietersz en Griego" were robbed of eighty-nine of their cattle by the "Sounquase Hottentots". Corporal Dede, who had been transferred to the Company's post at Vogel Valleij,⁷⁷ was once again called on to respond. With six men on horseback he pursued the robbers to the Heuningberg and, after a three hour fight, recovered some of the stock.⁷⁸

No sooner had he returned the cattle to Captains Pietersz and Griego when, on 18 January, word came that they had been attacked again, this time by the "Kookemans". The robbers were driving the cattle up the Elandskloof⁷⁹ when Dede and his men caught up with them. Fighting on foot the colonists killed or wounded twenty of these "Bosjesmans" before the remainder fled, leaving behind them forty-three cattle and many abandoned weapons.⁸⁰ This was not the end of Dede's trials for soon afterwards another "Caapse capitein", Kuyper, complained that his kraal, which was over the Berg River, had been plundered by "Bosjesmans". Five of his wives and all of his children were killed and his cattle were driven away. The indefatigable Dede managed to kill three of the San attackers and recover some of the livestock to return to the bereaved Kuyper.⁸¹ In March it was the turn of Sergeant Donderstad and the soldiers of the Waveren post who were called on to rescue the livestock of Captain Pieter Passagie. The "Bosjesmans" had stolen 150 of his cattle but 149 of these were recovered after a three hour fight in a wood. Two of the robbers were killed.⁸²

In an attempt to block some of the gaps in the chain of military posts now strung across the northern frontier a new post was established at Elandskloof. By February 1704 there were six such posts: Groenekloof, the Land van Waveren, Elandskloof, Riebeek-Kasteel, Soaquadrift and Vogel Valleij.⁸³ They seem to have had the desired effect because after one more

76. CA, VC 15, 29 Nov. 1701, p.1037.

77. Vogel Valleij or Vlei was the post which had been established between Riebeek-Kasteel and Waveren.

78. CA, VC 16, Journal, 1702-1704, 22 Jan. 1702, p.10.

79. The Elandskloofberge lie just to the east of Vogel Valleij.

80. CA, VC 16, 22 Jan. 1702, p.10.

81. Ibid.

82. CA, VC 16, 14 March 1702, pp.39-40.

83. Soaquadrift (also known as Sonquas or Sonkwasdriif) is on the Berg River about nine kilometres north-east of Riebeek-Kasteel and five kilometres west of Vogel Valleij. Its name suggests that it was the drift over which the

unsuccessful raid in April 1703 (by the "Ubiquaze natie" on Captain Koopman) the attacks ceased.⁸⁴ By June 1705 the government was trying to organise a meeting with the "Bosjesmans".⁸⁵ In November 1705 some of the Khoisan who had been responsible for the attacks came to the Castle in the company of Captain Koopman to make peace, or "sam sam", with the governor.⁸⁶ The peace makers were described as "een gezantschap uyt de zoogenaamde Bosjesmans off struijkrovers, zynde deze eenige der Hottentots die het vee van de verre af buyten afgelegene vrijluiden hebben geroofd".⁸⁷ Their identity, therefore, remained unclear, but the Company required them to promise to refrain from further attacks on colonial livestock. They were sent on their way with gifts of beads and tobacco whilst, in a further attempt to stabilize the frontier, the governor appointed or recognised various new Khoikhoi captains. These included three Klein Namaqua by the names of Plato, Jason and Vulkaan.⁸⁸ A similar ceremony was observed in May 1708 when various captains or representatives of the "50, 60 en 100 mylen verre afgelegene Hottentotse natien"⁸⁹ were summoned to the Castle in order to pay their compliments to the new governor, Louis van Assenburgh. Copper-headed canes were distributed, signifying that the recipient ruled under the Company's authority. Other gifts were also dispensed in an attempt to ensure that the Khoisan of the frontier remained in "die vrede, dat die natie Sam Sam noemd".⁹⁰ Time would tell how lasting this peace would be.

San would drive the stolen cattle. In February 1704 Nicolaas van deen Heuwel was appointed sergeant of all six *buitenposten*. CA, VC 16, 28 Feb. 1704, pp.421-422.

84. On this occasion Sergeant Louw and a commando succeeded in shooting dead some of the robbers and capturing two others alive. CA, VC 16, 24 April 1703. On 29 March 1703 the post-holder at Elandskloof, J. Rouws, had complained that the post-holder of Vogel Valleij (presumably Corporal Dede), had sought to commandeer his men, even though it was well known that Elandskloof (or "Eliphantskloof" as Rouws calls it) was the most perilous post in the land. In the event the Company gardens in Cape Town proved to be more dangerous for it was here that Rouws lost his life a year later in a drunken brawl. CA, VC 16, 29 March 1703, pp.239-241; pp.473-476.

85. CA, LM 10, 3 June 1705, pp.732-733. It should be noted that the years 1700 to 1704 were years of poor rainfall. The drought would have exacerbated colonial-Khoisan conflict whereas the return of more normal rainfall in 1705 might have eased some of the competition for resources and facilitated peace. For the decreased rainfall see A.J.H. van der Walt, *Das Ausdehnung der kolonie am Kap der Guten Hoffnung, 1700-1779*, (Berlin, 1928), p.32.

86. CA, VC 17, Journal 1705-1706, 2 Nov. 1705, pp.270-271.

87. "a group of the so-called Bushmen or highwaymen, they are some of the Hottentots who stole the stock of the outlying freemen". Ibid.

88. CA, VC 17, 26 Sept. 1705, p.225; 13 Oct. 1705, p.249.

89. "50, 60 and 100 [Dutch] mile distant Hottentot nations". CA, VC 18, Journal 1707-1708, 1 May 1708, p.605.

90. "the peace, which that nation calls Sam Sam". CA, VC 18, 1 May 1708, p.605.

THE IMPACT OF THE OPENING OF THE LIVESTOCK TRADE

As far as the Cape authorities were concerned the violent convulsions which had racked the northern frontier were due to one major cause: the opening of the livestock trade to colonists. Disregarding the upheaval caused by the colonisation of the Land van Waveren, and discounting the effects of its own trade with the Khoikhoi, the Company blamed the excesses of the freeburghers for the widespread Khoisan resistance.⁹¹ In fairness, there was a lot of evidence to support this point of view. Only four months after Willem Adriaan van der Stel's reluctant opening of the livestock trade he received the first Khoikhoi complaint. Captain Koopman informed him that certain freeburghers of Drakenstein had forced him to barter some of his cattle.⁹² Then, in October 1702, the governor was presented with such a shocking report of freeburgher abuses that he suspended the trade in livestock at once, pending further instructions from the *Heren XVII*.⁹³

According to the minutes of the Council of Policy, gangs of colonists, forty, fifty or more in number, had been journeying up to one hundred (Dutch) miles inland to the distant Khoikhoi. These men were not equipped for normal trading activities but had been provisioned, frequently by sponsors who stayed behind, with the necessary items for waging war. They had attacked the Khoikhoi and with "violence, murder and death" stolen their livestock. Because these Khoikhoi lived so far away and were ignorant of the Company's laws they had not come to the governor to complain. A group of forty-five freeburghers of "the worst sort" had returned with over 2 000 cattle which they had taken from the "Horisons ende Genocquas" some fifteen days journey from the Cape.⁹⁴ This band of rogues had made a covenant not to betray each other which they had written into the blank pages of a book whose title was, ironically enough, "De Christelijke Zeevaart" (The Christian Voyage). The governor was convinced that similar attacks had been perpetrated on those Khoisan who were currently raiding the livestock of more respectable colonists and the Company. It was undoubtedly because they had had so much of their livestock stolen, he argued, that the "Namaquaas, Ubiquaas ende Koekemans, met haar Bosjesmans" had joined together to seek redress.⁹⁵ In consequence it was now too dangerous for anyone to venture

91. CA, VC 16, 27 Oct. 1702, pp.165-169.

92. CA, VC 15, 10 June 1700, p.736.

93. CA, VC 16, 27 Oct. 1702, pp.165-169; CA, LM 10, 25 Nov. 1702, pp.777-778.

94. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 27 Oct. 1702, pp.389-391. The "Horisons" were probably a San or Strandlooper group ("Huri-san", according to Nienaber, means "Sea Bushmen") and the "Genocquas" were the Gonaquas, Khoikhoi of the Algoa Bay hinterland. Nienaber, *Khoekhoense Stamname*, pp.556-557, 384-393. Apparently the group had also attacked some of the Xhosa and the Inqua Khoikhoi. See Elphick, *Khoekhoi*, pp.227-228.

95. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 27 Oct. 1702, p.391.

inland, whilst remote freeburghers ran the risk of being massacred. For these reasons Van der Stel decided to close the trade until further notice and initiate an investigation into the crimes which had been committed.⁹⁶

In the event nothing came of this enquiry as: "So many of the settlers were implicated in the affair that half of the colony would have been ruined".⁹⁷ Nor did the livestock trade remain closed for very long for the *Heren XVII* ordered it re-opened in July 1704.⁹⁸ It is, however, not inconceivable that this temporary cessation of the open trade helped to dampen the flames of Khoisan resentment between 1702 and 1705. Van der Stel was later to be accused of hypocrisy and self-interest for having closed the livestock trade during this period.⁹⁹ Irrespective of the truth of this accusation a glance at the figures for the increase in the livestock holdings of the colonists during this time are instructive. In the eight years before the opening of the trade their herds had grown by 3 712 units of stock and their flocks by 5 449. In the first eight years of free trade the corresponding figures for growth were 8 871 and 3 5562.¹⁰⁰

The first opportunity which the government had to observe at first hand the devastation which had been caused by the opening of the livestock trade came in October 1705 when Johannes Starrenberg, the new *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, was sent on an expedition to try to obtain trek oxen from the nearby Khoikhoi.¹⁰¹ Starrenburg's instructions were that he should confine his operations to Khoikhoi groups adjacent to the colony since those further away were bound to be

96. Ibid.; CA, VC 16, 27 Oct. 1702, pp.165-169. Instructions were also sent to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch asking him to ascertain how many trading parties had gone out since the opening of the cattle trade with the Khoikhoi in 1700. CA, LM 10, 25 Nov. 1702, pp.777-778.

97. Fouché, *Diary of Adam Tas*, p.334-335. Fouché is quoting Van der Stel's summary of his examination of the forty-five men who were arrested for their part in the expedition. Fouché disagrees with this conclusion, believing that "the Governor was afraid to punish the reivers, because he had so frequently been guilty himself of similar outrages upon the Hottentots, that had he punished the settlers, his own doings would have come to light". Ibid., p.337.

98. The livestock trade was re-opened by the *Heren XVII* on 24 July 1704 with the futile proviso that no violence should be employed. See "Extract from the Memorial of Commissioner C.J. Simons" in Raidt, (ed.), *Valentyn*, Vol. 2, p.227 and n.276.

99. See Fouché, *Diary of Adam Tas*, pp.333-343. "To represent Van der Stel as the champion of the natives against the greed of the settlers and the indifference of the Directors, is nothing short of ridiculous. He placed an interdict upon the cattle traffic, not to protect the Hottentots against the colonists, but to rid himself of all interference on the part of the latter, and so keep the Hottentots to himself to plunder at his ease." Ibid., p.343.

100. R. Elphick and V.C. Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 2nd edition (Cape Town, 1989), p.21.

101. Starrenburg's instructions and the diary of his journey are reproduced in Raidt (ed.), *Valentyn*, pp.2-57. See also CA, VC 17, 16 Oct. 1705, pp.257-269 for his instructions. Starrenburg was appointed *landdrost* in July 1705 and was a loyal supporter of W.A. van der Stel. He was dismissed, along with the governor, in 1707.

hostile as a result of their treatment at the hands of unscrupulous freeburghers. He was, moreover, expected to trade in the most gentle and inoffensive manner so as to ensure an enduring relationship of mutual goodwill. Naturally, if he met with any violence from anyone, he was "to be sure to pay them with the same coin". He was also expected to note the situation, suitability and fertility of the land he traversed, obviously with a view to future colonisation. In order to help him in these assessments he was accompanied by the experienced and widely travelled chief gardener of the Company, Jan Hartogh.¹⁰²

Starrenburg's journal and his letters¹⁰³ from the frontier zone provide us with an invaluable glimpse of that region after a period of unprecedented upheaval. As one of Van der Stel's henchmen he was, no doubt, inclined to emphasise the evils of the open trade in livestock but there is no reason to suppose that he was an inaccurate observer. Travelling north of the Piketberg, to the Verlorevlei, Starrenburg encountered some of the Grigiqua who seemed to be so poorly supplied with livestock that Starrenburg asked them:

how it happened that they had so little cattle, seeing that the Hon. Company had never bartered with them, whereat they replied that a certain freeman, generally called Dronke Gerrit, was come to their kraal a few years previously, accompanied by others, and without any parley fired on it from all sides, chased out the Hottentots, set fire to their huts, and took away all their cattle, without their knowing for what reason since they had never harmed any of the Dutch. By this they lost everything they had, and were compelled to betake themselves to the Dutch living further out, and there steal cattle again, and if they could get anything, rob their own compatriots; and with these cattle they then ran off into the mountains and feasted on them until it was all finished, and then getting more, several times succeeding in this, from which they still have a few beasts today.¹⁰⁴

Writing from Vier en Twintig Rivieren Starrenburg noted despondently that although the Khokhoi there boasted no fewer than ten captains this translated into a mere two kraals with hardly any accompanying livestock. In five weeks of travelling he had only obtained fifty-seven cattle. In the entire stretch of country from the Piketberg, along the Berg River, to the mountains in the east (the Swartland) he had not encountered a single kraal, supposing that all of the Khoikhoi were avoiding him and hiding their cattle¹⁰⁵:

102. Ibid.

103. For Starrenburg's letters (and the governor's replies) see CA, VC 17, 28 Nov. 1705, pp.295-98; 298-99; 299-305; 1 Dec. 1705, pp.303-09; 5 Dec. 1705, pp.310-317.

104. "Starrenburg's Journal", 26 Oct. 1705, in Raidt (ed.), *Valentyn*, p.25.

105. CA, VC 17, 28 Nov. 1705, pp.295-298.

By this I have realised with regret how the whole country has been spoilt by the recent freedom of bartering, and the atrocities committed by the vagabonds ... and so from men who sustained themselves quietly by cattle-breeding, living in peace and contentment divided under their chiefs and kraals, they have nearly all become Bushmen, hunters and brigands, dispersed everywhere between and in the mountains.¹⁰⁶

Although one should not take Starrenburg too literally - (a Khoikhoi did not simply become a "Bushman" by losing his cattle though he might become like a "Bushman") - his broader point is quite clear: the open trade in livestock had led to the disintegration of traditional Khoikhoi societies and inaugurated a period of anarchy. Groups like the Grigriqua and the Cochoqua were ceasing to exist. Remnants of them had probably already started the process of evasive migration which would eventually take them to the banks of the Orange River.¹⁰⁷ Some of them began to attach themselves to the stronger pastoralist societies about them, such as the *trekboers* or the Namaqua. Others, no doubt, did become hunters or brigands in the mountains. It is significant that the wealthiest Khoikhoi that Starrenburg encountered were those who lived near the protection of the Company post at Waveren. They too, however, tried to hide their cattle from him and Starrenburg seems to have failed to perceive that his, and his government's, activities were also contributing to the destruction of the Khoikhoi.¹⁰⁸ By the time he returned to Cape Town he had 152 cattle in his herd. To Starrenburg this was a pitiful amount but even these had not been granted willingly for he had threatened to report to the governor those who were reluctant to part with their cattle.¹⁰⁹

Similar cattle trading expeditions were despatched in 1707 and 1710 under the command of Jan Hartogh.¹¹⁰ The first of these netted 220 oxen and 242 sheep but Hartogh thought it important to emphasise that the principal Khoikhoi supplier, Captain Koopman, had complained that: "when the freemen came to barter, they took away by force all the cattle, cows and heifers, so that they (the Hottentots) could save nothing to breed from if in that manner they were robbed of their breeding stock".¹¹¹ Hartogh also added that some other Khoikhoi had said to him "that they had

106. "Starrenburg's Journal", 4 Nov. 1705, in Raidt (ed.), *Valentyn*, p.41.

107. See chapter eight below.

108. CA, VC 17, 26 Nov. 1705, pp.298-299; "Starrenburg's Journal", 20-22 Nov. 1705, in Raidt (ed.), *Valentyn*, pp.49-51.

109. See Fouché, *Diary of Adam Tas*, pp.338-341, for examples of how Starrenburg's original journal had been altered in the version published by W.A. van der Stel so as to delete Starrenburg's threatening language. See also CA, VC 17, 5 Dec. 1705, pp.310-311.

110. CA, VC 18, Journal, 1707-1708, 25 Oct. 1707, pp.329-331; CA, VC 19, Journal, 1709-1710, 20 Oct. 1710, pp.346-347.

111. CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched, 1707-1720, 18 April 1708. Also CA, VC 18, 22 Nov. 1707, p.369.

never seen it in their lives, or heard it from their ancestors, that the freemen were masters above the Company, but that they had always before this seen that the Company was the master".¹¹² The implication of this information was that the Company was losing control over its subjects in the frontier zone. Though this was doubtless true the Company was once again blind to its own faults. When Lieutenant Slotsboo visited the northern frontier districts in 1712 the Khoikhoi of Waveren were still relatively prosperous. A certain Captain Scipio and his followers owned over 2 000 sheep but refused to barter with Slotsboo, giving as his reason "that they behaved quietly and did no harm, and that they did not come to complain [to the Company]".¹¹³ Quite obviously the Khoikhoi viewed the Company's bartering expeditions as some sort of retributive exaction which were to be avoided at all costs. Another group of Khoikhoi around the Piketberg had many sheep and about 300 cattle but they too were loath to trade with Slotsboo and tried to hide their animals.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately for such survivors, desperately clinging to the remnants of their wealth, the continuous expansion of the colony was to dispossess them of far more than their cattle or their sheep.

LAND AND LABOUR IN THE FRONTIER ZONE, 1705-1726

Soon after the peace making ceremony of November 1705 colonial frontier farmers began to think it safe enough to pasture their livestock north of the Berg River in the vicinity of the Piketberg. The area was no doubt familiar territory to many colonists since hunting parties had been journeying as far as the Olifants River from 1660 onwards in search of elephant and hippopotami.¹¹⁵ It was still possible to obtain ivory at the Verlorevlei in 1705¹¹⁶ but by this date the area to the south of the Olifants River Mountains was fast becoming more attractive to colonial pastoralists than to hunters.

The first grazing permits issued for the Piketberg area which were recorded in the *Oude Wildschutteboeken* were granted in 1707, 1708 and 1709.¹¹⁷ From another source, however, we

112. CA, LM 21, 18 April 1708.

113. CA, LM 18, Letters Received, 1709-1718, 11 Nov. 1712; CA, LM 21, 11 Oct. 1712; 4 April 1713; Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.230.

114. Ibid.

115. Jan Danckert's expedition had reached the Olifants River in 1660. (See note 63 above). For subsequent hunting parties north of the Berg River see P.J. van der Merwe, *Trek*, chapters two and three. Hunting permits had preceded grazing permits and requests for the latter only began to predominate in 1703. See Van der Walt, *Das Ausdehnung*, p.20.

116. In November 1705 Starrenburg was told by some "Bushmen" of the Piketberg district that some Dutch traders had just made off, illegally, with twelve big elephant tusks. CA, VC 17, 1 Dec. 1705, pp.303-306.

117. The first colonists to register grazing permits around the Piketberg were Jurgen Potkiwit, Floris Slabbert, Jacobus Overny, Hendrik Roodenby, Jan Hofman, Willem ten Damme, Arie Kruijsman, Jan Baarentsz Seker and

learn that a certain Jacob van Hoeven had a cattle post at the Piketberg as early as 1706 which was occupied by a shepherd and two *knechts* called Jan Cazaar and Jan Willemsz.¹¹⁸ That the area was wild and dangerous at this stage may be deduced from the fate of Van Hoeven. Two of his slaves murdered him at the Berg River and then tried to convince his *knechts* that their master had disappeared whilst hunting eland¹¹⁹ - an incident which illustrates both that it was unsafe to be a single Dutchman in the frontier zone and that eland were still plentiful in the Swartland. A steady trickle of grazing permits continued to be issued for the area until, in 1714, the loan-farm or *leningplaats* system was adopted.¹²⁰

Freeburghers could now secure the land they desired for the annual payment of twelve Rijksdaalders to the Company. For this fee they acquired the unrestricted use of an area of approximately 2 420 hectares - calculated by a radius of half-an-hour's walk from a central point. In practice, however, so long as they did not infringe on a neighbour's territory they could use as much land as they could control. The most crucial factor determining the establishment of a loan farm was the availability of a permanent source of standing water. The prior rights of the indigenous Khoisan inhabitants were seldom consulted and it is, perhaps, far from coincidental that this development towards a more secure form of land tenure for the colonial pastoralists should have occurred shortly after the outbreak of smallpox in 1713 swept aside the last remnants of cohesive Khoisan societies in the area.

The smallpox epidemic of 1713 fell on the Khoisan at a time when their societies were already reeling from an accumulation of shocks. Although the degree of mortality experienced among them has been the subject of debate¹²¹ - principally because of the inadequacy of the records - the

Andries Kuijper. CA, Receiver of Land Revenue, Oude Wildschutteboeken, (hereafter RLR), 1, pp.164, 165, 166, 185, 206. I am extremely grateful to Professor Leonard Guelke for generously making his transcriptions of the RLR records available to me.

118. CA, VC 17, 5 June 1706, pp.483-491.

119. Ibid.

120. Grazing permits had been issued before 3 July 1714 but after this date the Company insisted on a payment, or rental, for this privilege. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 1707-1715, 3 July 1714, p.412. By profiting from the appropriation of land the government was thus encouraging colonial expansion. At the same time a number of farmers in the Land van Waveren were permitted to transform their loan farms into freehold farms. Ibid, 31 July 1714, pp.414-15.

121. See R. Ross, "Smallpox at the Cape of Good Hope in the 18th Century", in C. Fyfe and D.M. McMasters, (eds.), *African Historical Demography* (Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1971), pp.416-428; Andrew B. Smith, "The Disruption of Khoi Society in the 17th Century", (seminar paper, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 23 February 1983); Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.229-234. Ross estimates 30% Khoikhoi fatalities whilst Elphick suggests that the effect was "catastrophic" without estimating a percentage loss of population.

impact of the disease should not be minimised. From what we know of the effects of smallpox on other societies lacking immunological resistance, the fatalities must have been dreadful. Even if the true cause of these fatalities was not simply immunological deficiency but a combination of psychological, economic, social and political weakness (induced by the shock of conquest) combined with the cumulative effect of serial episodes of different diseases (such as typhoid, measles and the common cold) the consequences were no less lethal.¹²² The epidemic was first noted in the Company slave lodge on 18 April 1713.¹²³ By 6 May it was remarked that the Khoikhoi were being badly afflicted and on 19 May the governor was told that those Khoikhoi who fled into the interior to escape the plague were being killed by their own people in an attempt to prevent its spread.¹²⁴ There was still smallpox in Drakenstein on 28 November and it was recorded that the majority of Khoikhoi had been "weggerukt".¹²⁵ Not long afterwards a visitor to the Cape reported that: "the Hottentots ... died in their hundreds. They lay everywhere on the roads ... cursing at the Dutchmen, who they said had bewitched them, they fled inland with their kraals, huts, and cattle in hopes there to be freed from the malign disease".¹²⁶

Although information regarding the impact of the disease on the Khoisan of the Cape interior is sketchy we know that the Khoikhoi kraals of the Piketberg area were very hard hit. Whereas Lieutenant Slotsboo had found some of the Khoikhoi groups of the northern frontier regions moderately well supplied with livestock in 1712, the situation was very different in 1714. In November that year Sergeant J.D. Feyerabendt, a Company soldier who had been sent to barter cattle, reported from Sonquas Drift that the Khoikhoi were now scattered in an "unorganized" manner and very poorly supplied with cattle.¹²⁷ Earlier in the year representatives of the Piketberg Khoikhoi had come to the Castle to report that their captains were all dead and that barely one in ten of their number had survived the smallpox.¹²⁸ Scanty though this evidence is, it may be seen that there were fewer impediments to the expansion of the colonial frontier in 1714 than there had been before and it is in this context that the introduction of the loan-farm system should be viewed.

122. See Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.196-216.

123. CA, VC 20, Journal 1711-1714, 18 April 1713, p.109.

124. CA, VC 20, 6 May 1713, p.121; 19 May 1713, p.129.

125. CA, VC 20, 28 Nov. 1713, p.296.

126. Valentyn, quoted by Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.232. So great was the mortality amongst the Khoikhoi that the colonists feared that they would not be able to carry the crops from the fields to the granaries - an indication of the importance of the Khoikhoi in agricultural labour by 1713. CA, LM 18, Letters Received, 1709-1718, 3 Nov. 1713.

127. CA, LM 18, 9 Nov. 1714.

128. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.233.

Since the loan-farm was to remain the preferred system of colonial land tenure within the frontier zone throughout the eighteenth century and, since it had important implications for all of the societies of the frontier zone, the institution should be examined carefully. In the first place such a system implied private ownership, or use of, the land. This was contrary to the Khoikhoi and San custom of regarding the land and its resources as being the communal property of the group.¹²⁹ Land thus became a commodity. Even though the holder of a loan-farm did not, in theory, have the same security of tenure as one of the freehold farmers of the south-western Cape, in practice loan-farms became the private and virtually inalienable property of their owners. Nor did failure to pay the rent, or *recognitiegeld*, necessarily mean the confiscation of the property, for farmers could amass considerable arrears before exciting the government's wrath.¹³⁰ It was not long, either, before allocated loan-farms began to assume a value quite independent of their annual rental fee. When a loan-farm changed hands it did so at a market related price with the new owner ostensibly paying not for the land but the *opstal*, or fixed improvements on the farm.¹³¹ Even those who were lucky enough to secure a good loan-farm before anyone else, had to pay for it. In 1732 the annual rental fee increased to twenty-four Rijksdaalders which was approximately the same price as the annual wage of a Company soldier.¹³² But stock and equipment - not labour - were the real expenses for an aspirant *trekboer* for, although he had to invest far less on these items than an arable farmer, the costs help to explain why not every *trekboer* had his own loan-farm. It has been estimated that it would have cost the average stock-farmer about 1 000 guilders (or 333 Rijksdaalders) to set himself up.¹³³

It was for these reasons that many colonists in the frontier zone did not bother to register a loan-farm in their own names but preferred to work as supervisors or *knechts* for wealthier men. Some lived as *bijwooners*, or tenants, on another man's land, handing over part of the natural increase of their flocks and herds as payment for this privilege. In practice the *trekboers* engaged in a great deal more reciprocal community sharing of the land's resources (amongst themselves that is) than the *Oude Wildschutteboeken* suggest. Occasionally farms would be registered in the names

129. See Shapera, *Khoisan*, pp.319-21 and Alan Barnard, *Hunters And Herders Of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.240-246.

130. In 1792 Nederburgh and Frijkenius calculated that arrears stood at 376 360 Rijksdaalders. Boeseken, "Die Nederlandse Kommissaris en die 18de eeuwse samelewing aan die Kaap", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1944, pp.112-3, 200-01.

131. L. Guelke, "Freehold farmers and frontier settlers", pp.86-87.

132. For the increase in loan-farm rentals see G.C. de Wet (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 8, 1729-1734, 28 Feb. 1732, p.195. Details of the wages of Company soldiers may be found in Gerrit Schutte, "Company and colonists at the Cape", pp.294-295.

133. Guelke, "Freehold farmers", pp.86-87.

of two people but there were also many unrecorded people who were using the land.¹³⁴ Groups of *trekboers* often grazed their herds together for mutual protection or pooled their grazing and water resources so as to enable their livestock to cover a wider range. In this way they benefited from changes in the veld's nutrients and guaranteed access to a number of different watering places in times of drought. Such arrangements lasted only as long as there was an external threat - or as long as the particular resources of an area could support multiple users. As the population of humans and animals grew, overgrazing occurred and water became scarcer. This led to more exclusive ideas of ownership and the increased competition for resources provided a further stimulus for the continuing expansion of the frontier.

Trekboer possession of the land, whether at the level of the community or the individual, necessarily meant increasing Khoikhoi and San dispossession. As the colonists consolidated their hold over a region the chances of the Khoisan leading an independent existence diminished. One response to this situation was resistance, but increasingly, and for a variety of reasons, numbers of Khoikhoi began to enter the service of the colonists. By 1700 this process was already fairly advanced in the south-western Cape. In 1688, for instance, Simon van der Stel had written of the neighbouring Khoikhoi that: "they become more and more attached to us; so that in the busiest of the harvest or the ploughing season, they come down among us like the Westphalians in the Netherlands".¹³⁵ Although some Khoikhoi were thus already becoming integrated into the agricultural labour force of the south-western Cape and performed, in addition, a number of domestic tasks for the colonists, the majority of Khoikhoi to enter colonial society did so as herders or drovers. This was particularly true of areas where pastoralism was the predominant activity of the colonial farmers.

The Khoikhoi were, after all, pastoralists themselves and cattle and sheep had underpinned their way of life for centuries. In the past, a time honoured response from those Khoikhoi who had lost their livestock, was to attach themselves, as servants or clients, to more fortunate pastoralists

134. It should not be thought that the loan-farm records are either infallibly accurate or a comprehensive indication of colonial settlement in the frontier districts. Apart from failing to show the presence of *knechts* and *bijwooners* they also fail to reveal the existence of sons and other relatives who might have worked for the family patriarch. Fugitives and deserters would never dare to register claims to the land they exploited; nor is the paucity of "Bastaards" in the registers a proof of their non-existence. Large areas of land were considered to be too environmentally marginal to warrant the expense of paying *rekognisiegeld* and these areas were used either as commonage or by unlicensed pastoralists. It was thus possible for marginal people to survive on marginal land provided they were prepared to remain mobile. As long as the frontier continued to advance and land was plentiful there was, in any event, little incentive for frontiersmen to register the land they already possessed with their presence.

135. Moodie, *The Record*, Part 1, p.423. See also note 126 above.

who still retained flocks and herds.¹³⁶ By tending the animals of their masters they hoped, eventually, to build up herds and flocks of their own. In the meantime they could enjoy the security and sustenance derived from remaining within a pastoralist society and could avoid the demeaning descent to a livestockless life of hunter-gathering. It was thus logical and consistent for those Khoikhoi who had lost their land and livestock to become the labourers of the *trekboers*. They brought with them their unrivalled knowledge of the local environment and their remarkable skills with livestock. Some of them even brought their own livestock, if they had managed to retain any, for they realised that they would benefit from the protection which an armed and mounted *trekboer* could provide against the many thieves and predators of the frontier zone.¹³⁷ We should note that, quite apart from the Company and freeburgher "trading" parties there were also large groups of runaway slaves, deserters and vagabonds roaming the frontier at this time, all of whom were a threat to Khoikhoi livestock.¹³⁸ Different groups of Khoisan stole the cattle of more fortunate Khoikhoi and in such circumstances it paid to have the protection of the local *trekboers*. By caring for the flocks and herds of their protectors, frequently alongside the remnants of their own, the Khoikhoi did much to prolong their existence.

In exchange for this protection, or as a condition for their continued access to water and grazing, the Khoikhoi began to perform labour services for the Dutch. The agreements which they entered into with the colonists were not formalised in writing - a fact which had two important consequences. In the first place there is very little written evidence of such contracts, and, in the second place, being oral, they were frequently broken by the parties involved. The Khoikhoi could expect to receive wages, usually in the form of sheep, though towards the end of the century money became acceptable. Food and drink were a basic wage though sometimes clothes ("kos en kleren") were also supplied. The majority of the Khoikhoi, being accustomed to a life of peripatetic independence, preferred short or seasonal spells of employment but it was usually only when employers or employees saw fit to complain about a breach of contract that the terms of service were recorded.

136. See Shapera, *Khoisan*, p.294.

137. For example, in 1730 some Khoikhoi who worked on the farm of Hendrik Eksteen at Saldanha Bay had their cattle stolen from them by Khoisan raiders. A commando of Company men recovered their cattle for them. CA, LM 25, Letters Despatched, 27 July-30 Dec. 1732, Governor to Landdrost Lourensz, 31 May 1731, p.392.

138. See chapter 4 below.

The first such complaint for which we have evidence was in 1717,¹³⁹ but the earliest details of a contract between a Khoikhoi and a colonist come from an incident in 1726. In March that year a Khoikhoi labourer in the service of Corporal Jacob Titus at the Company post of Saldanha Bay complained to the Cape Town authorities that his cattle were being withheld. According to Titus the Khoikhoi, who had cattle of his own, had been hired to take care of the Company's sheep for a period of two years. During this time he was to be paid two weaned ewes annually and be properly supplied with food and drink. The Khoikhoi in question had, however, left nine months before the expiry of the contract, taking his cattle with him but leaving his sheep. The reason for his departure was that he had been roughly treated by a soldier who accused him of having been a negligent shepherd. The Company warned Titus to return the Khoikhoi's sheep to him and added that "no further engagement shall be entered into with that people, rather leaving them to depart with their cattle whither soever they like".¹⁴⁰

Although the Company may have preferred not to employ Khoikhoi labourers the freeburghers had less choice in the matter given the high costs involved in buying slaves or employing Europeans. That some of the Khoikhoi saw fit to complain to the authorities about their conditions of service is testimony to the fact that they were coming to see themselves as colonial subjects. That the Company responded by settling disputes between masters and servants - and by punishing both colonists and Khoikhoi if the occasion arose - is an indication that, for its part, the Company was also coming to regard those Khoikhoi who lived amongst the colonists as falling under its jurisdiction.¹⁴¹ Despite the advanced state of disintegration of Khoikhoi societies within the colonial frontier by 1705 the Company did not renounce its earlier policy (however imperfectly observed) of neither harming nor enslaving the indigenous inhabitants. Its ability to protect these inhabitants, however, was not particularly impressive and the eighteenth century witnessed a progressive deterioration in the circumstances of the Khoikhoi - especially those working for colonists.¹⁴² At this point it will be instructive to provide some examples of the

139. On 1 June 1717 the Governor wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch as follows: "The Hottentots who are bearers of this complain that Hans Jes and Martin Schoenmaker have some cattle of theirs which they will not surrender. You are carefully to enquire into this matter and if the charges are true the parties named are to be prosecuted. Such frauds cannot be allowed." CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched, 3 Jan. 1707-31 Dec. 1720, p.76.

140. CA, LM 19, Letters Received, 1717-1726, from Jacob Titus (or Titius) at Saldanha Bay, 2 April 1726; CA, LM 24, Letters Despatched, 5 Jan. 1726-27 July 1728, to Corporal Jacob Titus, 11 April 1726, pp.63-64.

141. On this process see R. Ross, "The Rule of Law at the Cape in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, IX, 1980 and "The changing legal position of the Khoisan in the Cape Colony, 1652-1795", *African Perspectives*, 2, 1979, pp.67-87. See also Wayne Dooling, "Law and Community in a Slave Society: Stellenbosch District, c.1760-1820", (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991).

142. See pp.253-278 below. See also Nigel Penn, "Labour, land and livestock in the Western Cape during the eighteenth century: the Khoisan and the Colonists", in W.G. James and M. Simons, (eds.), *The Angry Divide:*

Company's response to unacceptable instances, which marred working relationships between colonists and Khoikhoi in the frontier zone of the early eighteenth century, so that later events may be viewed in perspective.

In 1706 Joost Bevernagie, a settler in the Land van Waveren, shot a cow belonging to the Khoikhoi captain, Prins, because it had strayed onto his land. Bevernagie was summoned to appear before the Council of Justice and asked whether "he was not aware that the Hottentots are owners of that land, and that field and grass are common to them for pasturing their cattle". He was ordered to give Prins another cow and to pay a fine of ten Rijksdaalders. Bevernagie claimed, however, that Corporal Tielweerts had told him that if Khoikhoi cattle came onto his land he could shoot them. For this ill-judged advice the corporal was demoted, fined and forced to straddle a wooden horse for three consecutive days with weights of twenty-five pounds attached to his feet. Quite clearly, therefore, in this case the Company could not be accused of taking the rights of friendly Khoikhoi lightly.¹⁴³

Crimes committed against the persons of the Khoikhoi were taken even more seriously. In January 1707 the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch was informed by some Khoikhoi that, six months before, two colonists had killed a Khoikhoi man and buried him secretly with the help of a slave.¹⁴⁴ The *landdrost* decided to investigate the matter and set off with a committee to view the exhumed corpse at the farm of Jacob Louw near the Paardeberg.¹⁴⁵ The evidence was sufficient to lead to the arrest of the accused and to put them on trial. Thus it was that Jan Dirks of Stockholm (a Company sailor and *knecht* of Jan Louw), Jan Andriesz (a freeburgher and *knecht* of Jacobus van den Heiden) and the slave Titus of Maccasser were brought before the court. Though Andriesz and Titus confessed their guilt Dirks was made of sterner stuff. Eventually, towards the end of March, Dirks was taken to the torture chamber in order to impress upon him the lengths to which the Company was prepared to go in order to extract his confession. When this gentle introduction did not loosen his tongue he was obliged, three days later, to put his foot on the corpse of the victim. Such tactics did not scare Dirks and, after a beating from the castle militia, he was returned to the torture chamber the next day. Fifty pound weights were attached to

Social and Economic History of the Western Cape (Cape Town, 1989), pp.2-19; also "Anarchy and Authority in the Koue Bokkeveld, 1739-1779: The Banishing of Carel Buijtendag", in *Kleio*, XVII, 1985, pp.24-43.

143. CA, Council of Justice (hereafter CJ) 4, Original Rolls and Minutes of Criminal Cases, 1701-1708, 30 Nov. 1706, p.267. See also Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.181; Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, pp.28-29.

144. CA, VC 18, Journal 1707-1708, 24 Jan. 1707, p.19.

145. *Ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1707.

his big toes and he was suspended from the ceiling. At this point the records state, rather inaccurately, that "buijten pijn of banden" he freely confessed.¹⁴⁶

What had happened, back in July 1706, was that Andriesz had been on his way from Rondebosch to his master's post at Riebeek-Kasteel when he had stopped off at Jacob Louw's farm, "Doornekraal", near Paardeberg.¹⁴⁷ Here he met Dirks who had two Khoikhoi with him, called Hans and Lapje, as well as two slaves. On Andriesz's wagon was a barrel of wine and a jar of brandy. The two *knechts* began drinking and continued late into the night, indulging, eventually, in a bout of harmless wrestling with each other. During the fight some money fell from Andriesz's pocket without either of the contestants noticing it. Lapjes, though, quickly picked it up, wrapped it in a handkerchief and hid it in the oven. The drunken wrestlers fell into an exhausted sleep to awake, next morning, to recriminations, accusations and denials. Andriesz accused Dirks of taking his money; Dirks accused the slaves and beat them. Then Hans told the *knechts* that Lapje had taken the money so they tied him up and hanged him, by the arms, from a beam. Despite the fact that Andriesz recovered all of his money he proceeded to beat Lapje with a bull's pizzle on his naked body. When Andriesz tired he paused to refresh himself with some of the remaining liquor and allowed Titus, smarting from his previously unjust beating, to continue the punishment. Jan Dirks then beat poor Lapje for the length of time it took to smoke a pipe and was followed, once more, by Jan Andriesz.¹⁴⁸ At last Lapje was cut down and his lacerated back and buttocks rubbed with pickling salt. He was then kicked outdoors, beaten by Titus with a stick

146. Ibid., 2 Feb. 1707, p.37; 11 Feb. 1707, pp.46-47; 12 Feb. 1707, p.47; 15 Feb. 1707, p.49; 18 March 1707, p.99; 19 March 1707, p.100; 22 March 1707, p.107; 23 March 1707, p.103; 8 April 1707, p.122-23; 11 April 1707, p.124; 21 July 1707, p.243. In forcing Dirks to place his foot on his victim the Council of Justice was acting according to the principle of *ad actum proximum*, the belief that the guilty would confess when directly confronted with a situation that closely resembled the criminal act which they had allegedly committed. The Dutch words mean "without pain or chains".

147. CA, VC 18, 23 July 1707, pp.244-257.

148. Ibid. The punishment of Lapje is permeated by sexual significance. In the first place wielding a "bullepees" as a whip is clearly analogous to using the penis as an aggressive weapon. The psychosexual significance of whipping the bare buttocks of a helpless victim has been analysed by Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 1989), pp.289-306. Theweleit states that: "Ritual flogging seems to me to be the most "sexual", the most obviously phallic of all forms of torture; one which forces the victim to participate in a form of "negative" coitus. The rhythm of the strokes offers a fair imitation of coital thrusts; the screams of the victim rise along the lines of the excitability curve, climax, then slacken...The act of beating has *duration*; it stores up tension, defers, and heightens..."p.303. The unit of duration - the smoking of a pipe of tobacco - was a common measure of time for those dispensing punishment in the preindustrial world. The masturbatory gratification derived by the torturer at the whipping post has an ancient history. Thus in the second century, A.D., the writer Artemidorus, in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, could explain how dreams of masturbation were closely associated with the theme of slavery, "because what is involved is a service that one renders oneself (hands are like servants who do the bidding of their master, the penis) and because the word that means "to bind to a post", used in connection with the whipping of slaves, also means "to have an erection". See Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 3 (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.20.

and, finally, left to die. The three homicides then hid the body in a porcupine hole and swore each other to secrecy. Only Dirks tried to keep his promise.¹⁴⁹

This brutal story raises a number of interesting points about life and death on an early Cape frontier farm. It would seem to confirm the opinion of those who see the frontier as a region where violence and sexual transgression are never far below the surface, but the principal issue at stake here is the Company's attitude towards crimes against the Khoikhoi. The two *knechts* were sentenced to banishment from the colony with confiscation of their property. Titus was flogged and sent to Robben Island for five years.¹⁵⁰ Though these sentences do not seem harsh the Company's energy in investigating the case is a clear sign that it did not condone brutality towards the Khoikhoi. Its attitude was that "these natives cannot be regarded and treated as less than free people", that beating and murder were intolerable outrages "even if perpetrated on a Hottentot" and that "the laws make no distinction [between crimes] committed against Christians and heathens".¹⁵¹

Elphick, who has made a close study of the court records for the years 1672-1713, concludes that sentences meted out to the Khoikhoi during this period were generally harsher than those meted out to whites for similar crimes.¹⁵² This was a tendency which increased markedly as the century progressed.¹⁵³ On the whole, however, the years between 1705 and 1726 passed without too many unpleasant incidents between *trekboers* and Khoikhoi labourers in the northern Cape frontier zone. Partly, no doubt, this was due to the very limited number of *trekboers* involved. Guelke has estimated that there were a mere twenty-five independent stockholders in the entire colony by 1716 (as opposed to 260 agricultural producers)¹⁵⁴ and although this figure does not include *knechts*, or those farmers who owned both arable land and loan-farms, it does serve to

149. CA, VC 18, 23 July 1707, pp.244-257.

150. Ibid., p.257.

151. Cited by Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.181.

152. Ibid., pp.181-188.

153. In July 1708 Jean de Thuiet of Wagenmaakers Vallei was sentenced to be "geharquebuseerd" to death (i.e. shot with a harquebus) for having beaten his slave, Andries, and a Khoikhoi called "Kaffer" to death. CA, VC 18, 7 July 1708, pp.664-669. In later years, however, the maximum penalty for killing a Khoikhoi labourer, where the guilty party was white, was banishment or imprisonment on Robben Island. See Penn, "Labour, land and livestock", pp.13-19 for instances of inequalities in the treatment of colonists and Khoikhoi before the law. Wayne Dooling's "Law and Community in a Slave Society", pp.99-130, shows that even though Khoikhoi (and slaves) increasingly turned to the law for protection in the latter half of the eighteenth century this did not mean that the law treated servants or slaves as the equals of their masters.

154. Guelke, "Freehold farmers", pp.84-85.

remind us that, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the *trekboers* were themselves a vulnerable group within the frontier zone.

KHOISAN RESISTANCE, 1712-1716

After the peace ceremonies of 1708 the first signs of a resurgence of Khoisan resistance to *trekboer* encroachment occurred in 1712. In October of that year the Council of Policy received reports that 5 000 of the Great Namaqua¹⁵⁵ were massing on the Olifants River preparatory to launching an attack against the colonists. So seriously did the Company regard this threat that it mobilised 185 armed men to meet it and, under the command of Lieutenant Slotsboo, the force marched for four days along the Olifants River without, however, finding any sign of either the Great or Little Namaqua.¹⁵⁶ Nor did any of the local Khoikhoi seem to think an attack was imminent. The rumours had been started by one Jacobus Overny who, together with three Khoikhoi, had journeyed to the Little Namaqua before the winter in order to barter for elephant tusks. Whilst there he had stolen five heifers from the San of the Little Namaqua and now, in the dry season, feared that the Little Namaqua would seek revenge by crossing the Olifants river and stealing his cattle. Overny had communicated his fear to his neighbours in the Piketberg and caused a general panic. As punishment for raising the alarm unnecessarily Overny was forbidden from grazing his cattle out of sight of the Castle at Cape Town.¹⁵⁷

This incident throws light on the relationship which existed between the Little Namaqua and the San. The minutes of the Council of Policy describe how the year before Overny's visit the Little Namaqua had "suffered from some hostile acts between themselves and their bushmen and had taken away the cattle of the latter".¹⁵⁸ The use of the possessive pronoun is interesting because it indicates that the Little Namaqua exercised a type of hegemony over the San to their south. It would seem that the conflict between them had been resolved by the time of Overny's visit and that by robbing the San Overny was committing a hostile act against the Little Namaqua. These San, whoever they were, were to play a major role in the disturbances which followed.

In November 1714, when Sergeant Feyerabendt was returning from a cattle bartering expedition, he reported from Sonquas Drift that he was sending a certain Khoikhoi by the name of Jakhals to

155. For the Namaqua, both Great and Little, see pp.281-288 below.

156. CA, LM 18, Letters Received, 11 Nov. 1712; CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched, 4 April 1713. The commando included sixty-three Khoikhoi.

157. CA, LM 21, 4 April 1713; CA, LM 18, 11 Nov. 1712.

158. CA, LM 18, Letters Received, 11 Nov. 1712. "...maar dat den Klyn Amaqua over een jaar leeden eenige vyantschap onder haar en harre bossiesmans gehaat heeft en haar qualyk gehandelt en 't vee afgenomen".

the Cape so that this individual could lay charges against the Little and Great Namaqua. These people, he alleged, had stolen all of his cattle leaving him with only a few sheep. Feyerabendt, however, requested that the governor might detain Jakhals since the "Gonnema" and "Sonqua" had, in turn, brought many charges against him.¹⁵⁹ Clearly the Khoisan of the frontier zone were in a state of agitation.

On 30 June 1715 some San in the mountains of the Waveren district (possibly the Ubiqua) made a raid on the cattle of the nearby colonists. The farmers gave chase and shot several of the robbers. One of the colonists was wounded in the leg by an arrow. Adding insult to injury the San had enough audacity to promise the farmers that they would return and that they would not be able to catch them since they would hide in the highest mountains. Despite this boast one of the robbers was caught by a certain Theunis Bota who forwarded him to the Castle for questioning. A follow up commando was planned and reinforcements sent to the *buitenposten* but no further action was taken.¹⁶⁰ On 3 August, however, the governor, De Chavonnes, received another report whose content was that the San had made off with 700 sheep belonging to Pieter Joubert, a Waveren farmer, and that Joubert's shepherd, a slave, had been kidnapped.¹⁶¹ An emergency meeting of the *Heemraden* was convened to discuss the situation but it was only on 15 October that the Government's response was finalised. Six soldiers, under the command of a corporal or sergeant, were to defend the colonists and friendly Khoikhoi around each of the military posts of the frontier zone - Hex River, Witsenberg and Piekenierskloof.¹⁶² The colonists, however, had not waited for the deliberations of their superiors to reach fruition and had acted on their own initiative.

According to Sergeant Hendrik Treurniet, who wrote to the governor on 29 September, some freeburghers had been on an expedition (no doubt a commando) from which they had returned on 21 September. However, no sooner were they back in the Land van Waveren when, the very next day, the "Bushmen" had swept down and carried off 32 cattle and 700 sheep belonging to the farmer Pieter Willemsz van Heerden. Treurniet, two of his soldiers and thirteen freeburghers gave chase. Two and a half days later, though, the pursuers had to return without having caught the San for they had driven the livestock "day and night incessantly in order to get them beyond the

159. CA, LM 18, 9 Nov. 1714.

160. CA, 1/STB (Archives of the Landdrost and Heemrade, Stellenbosch), 1/4, Minutes of Landdrost and Heemrade, 5 Aug. 1715, p.149; CA, LM 21, 8 July 1715, p.54; Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, p.30.

161. CA, VC 21, 3 Aug. 1715, p.106.

162. Boeseken (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 15 Oct. 1715, pp.461-464.

mountains". The colonists had found 6 dead cattle and 200 dead sheep, recovering only one wounded cow. A slave and two Khoikhoi had been in charge of the animals. The former was found dead in a river bed, his body pierced by ten arrows. One of the Khoikhoi was also found dead, his skull smashed in and his body similarly quilled with deadly darts. The third man had, it seemed, been kidnapped by the San.¹⁶³

One of the Waveren farmers, Jan Harmse Potgieter, told Treurniet that he believed the attackers were members of the kraal from which the colonists had returned on 21 September. They had taken cattle from this kraal, upon which one of its members, a man called Poetsjinelle, had declared: "Go along with the cattle and my wife, I shall be in the Land of Waveren as quickly as you, if you wish to make peace". It would appear from this that the colonists were taking hostages. Schalk van der Merwe, one of the commando members, had assured Poetsjinelle that he ought to make peace and that he would be very well received in Waveren if he did so. Indeed, when the commando returned, the colonists were confident that peace was as good as made. It had therefore come as a shock to them that Poetsjinelle and his companions had come to rob rather than to repent. Treurniet had also been informed by some alarmed colonists that the San (or Khoisan) were about to launch a major attack against them and that they preferred to abandon their farms rather than be murdered.¹⁶⁴

Jan Harmse Potgieter was keen to lead a commando of thirty men against the enemy provided that they were given ammunition and permission to keep half of any cattle they recaptured. This offer the authorities declined, although they did urge the colonists of Waveren to support the military reinforcements which were being organised.¹⁶⁵ It was not long, however, before the Khoisan struck again. On 11 November Joost Bevernagie had 100 cattle and 500 sheep stolen from him. Two of his slaves were abducted. Some time before this another settler, Jacob Mostert, had had 36 cattle stolen and Pieter Rossouw's house had been burnt down. The estimated cost in stolen livestock was 30 000 guilders and it was claimed that the colonists of Waveren were so terrified that they had to sleep with firearms in their hands.¹⁶⁶ The governor therefore agreed to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch's request, namely, that a commando of freeburghers should be allowed to hunt down the robbers. The commando would be supplied with gunpowder and ammunition and be under the leadership of Schalk van der Merwe and Jan Harmse Potgieter. The governor

163. CA, LM 18, 29 Sept. 1715.

164. Ibid.

165. Boeseken (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 15 Oct. 1715, pp.461-464; Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, p.32.

166. Boeseken (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 20 Nov 1715, p.478.

did, however, think it prudent to caution the commando not to embitter this "brutaal en barbaars volk" any more than they already were.¹⁶⁷

A special significance has been attached to this 1715 commando for it is seen as the first to have been a purely burgher affair and, in this respect, a prototype of the commando system of the future. It has also been claimed that it was on this occasion that the term "commando" was first used so that it was indeed the first "true" commando.¹⁶⁸ In fact its significance does not so much lie in its composition as in the structures of legitimation and control. Earlier commandos had consisted solely of burghers or farmers. Every hot pursuit operation was, in a sense, a commando. What was different about the commando that was authorised on 20 November 1715 was precisely the fact that it was authorised. The government was now legitimising independent civilian retaliation and underwriting the cost of their ammunition. Similarly, the term "commando" can be traced back long before 1715 to 1676, when a commando of soldiers, burghers and Khoikhoi was called out to avenge the murder of hippopotami-hunting colonists at the Bree River.¹⁶⁹

The commando of Van der Merwe, Potgieter and twenty-two other burghers left Roodezand for the Kruis River on 2 December 1715. The Kruis was the name of the largest river flowing into the Verlore Vlei behind the Piketberg. As the commando engaged in reconnaissance, sending scouts up the nearby mountains, it captured two Khoisan women. Not long afterwards a kraal of at least fourteen Khoisan was discovered, protected by a very steep mountain on one side and a river with thick bushes on the other. On the morning of 11 December the commando, which had been stealthily approaching the kraal during the night, was spotted by the Khoisan. Fighting ensued and the Khoisan defended themselves vigorously with arrows and assegais. One of the colonists, Johannes Vosloo, had his musket explode in his hands but a series of charges seemed to put the Khoisan to flight. Pieter Zwanepoel and Lammert Lammertsz rushed forward. In the thick bush the first was stabbed through the leg by an assegai and the second had his belly slit open. Poor Lammertsz's entrails were pushed back into his skin and his friends crudely stitched him up: to no avail. He died on 16 December and was buried by the Brandewijns Fontein. The Khoisan

167. Ibid. "brutal and barbaric people".

168. Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, p.32. See also P.E. Roux, "Die Verdedigingstelsel aan die Kaap Onder die Hollands-Oosindiëse Kompanjie, 1652-1795", (M.A., Stellenbosch University, 1925), p.145; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, p.24.

169. Roux, "Verdedigingstelsel", p.142.

had, in the meantime, fled and the colonists captured 84 cattle, 214 sheep, 8 women and 9 children.¹⁷⁰

One of the women was sent forward by her captors in an attempt to convince the Khoisan to make peace. She returned with a defiant "No". The colonists therefore retreated with their booty being unwilling, whilst encumbered with livestock and captives, to renew the attack against a foe heartened by their ability to inflict casualties on the Dutch. True, many Khoisan had been shot, but the survivors were vengeful rather than vanquished. On 15 December, as the commando reached Thee Fontein, the Khoisan decided to attack the livestock, shooting arrows so as to kill two cattle and wound some others, including two horses. Once again the colonists sought to parley, sending one of the women to ask why the Khoisan would not make peace. The answer she brought back was that so long as the colonists kept any hostages they would not return alive and that since the oncoming night was going to be moonless they would have lots to think about. The colonists tried to compromise by releasing three women with gifts of tobacco but their scornful enemies replied that they would be waiting for them at Roodezand. True to their word, when the commando arrived home on 20 December, they found that Pieter van Heerden's cattle had been stolen.¹⁷¹

On receipt of this report the government sent Sergeant Treurniet to reinforce the military posts with twenty men. They also sent the overseer of the Company store, Wolfgangh Zwartsenburgh, with tobacco, beads and arrack in the hope that peace could be made.¹⁷² Zwartsenburgh seems to have had a measure of success for on 10 March 1716 it was reported that he had found the Khoisan tired of stealing and anxious for peace. They had also made a request for staffs of office from the Company.¹⁷³ The government decided to wait and see if they made any requests for a return of the livestock - half of which the Company had appropriated and half of which had been shared amongst the commando members - but was prepared to believe that peace had been achieved.¹⁷⁴ On 3 August the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch deemed it safe enough to request the withdrawal of men from the military posts and on 4 August this request was endorsed by the governor.¹⁷⁵

170. G.C. de Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 5, 1716-1719, 7 Jan. 1716, pp.1-2.

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid., pp.2-3.

173. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 5, 10 March 1716, pp.42-43; CA, LM 21, 28 March 1716, pp.59-60.

174. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 5, 18 Feb. 1716, p.24.

175. CA, LM 18, 3 Aug. 1716; CA, VC 21, 4 Aug. 1716, p.175.

THE SLAUGHTERING BUSINESS, 1716-1725

With a cessation in Khoisan hostilities the Company turned its attention to the crisis in the meat supply. Livestock diseases were rife and in September 1716 a "deplorable" state of affairs was being reported from all areas of the colony. The price of a pound of mutton increased by a stuiver, an unprecedented "extravagance". Never had there been such a "universal" sickness which, combined with losses due to Khoisan attacks the year before, had resulted in thousands of animals dying.¹⁷⁶ Zwartsenburgh was despatched to barter for cattle and similar expeditions went out at about the same time of year (September-November) in 1717 and 1718.¹⁷⁷ These expeditions obtained very little and in April 1718 the Cape authorities reported to Amsterdam that the Khoikhoi had hardly any more cattle.¹⁷⁸ Even the September 1718 expedition to the eastern frontier could only obtain 54 cattle and 5 sheep.¹⁷⁹ In July 1719 Amsterdam was informed that mortality amongst the cattle was again on the increase whilst meat was scarcer and dearer (three stuivers a pound). Between 1 600 and 1 700 horses had also perished.¹⁸⁰ By 1721 a great shortage of wheat was being recorded alongside a great shortage of meat and in May 1722 the *Heren XVII* was informed that the "chastening hand of heaven" was still causing continuous mortality amongst the colony's livestock. The price of meat was now fixed at three stuivers a pound whilst foreign shipping was not permitted to take live animals on board as provisions.¹⁸¹

In these circumstances it was necessary for the Company to send cattle-bartering expeditions much further than usual. Thus it was that in 1721 and 1724 Ensign Rhenius journeyed to Little Namaqualand.¹⁸² From the first of these trips he returned with 128 cattle - a disappointing result. The Little Namaqua did, however, seem to have escaped the worst ravages of the murrain and had also escaped the smallpox.¹⁸³ By 1724 the situation had changed. Smallpox was now prevalent amongst the Little Namaqua having reached them from the north. They also had very

176. CA V.C. 21, 14 Sept. 1716, pp.203-205. The cattle disease was first noted in July 1715 when the Company's wagons could not be employed due to the "sterven van een groote quantiteit trekbeesten". Zwartsenbergh was despatched to barter oxen from the Khoikhoi. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 30 July 1715, p.452.

177. CA, VC 21, 23 Nov. 1717, p.164; 5 Sept. 1718, p.123.

178. CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched, 4 April 1718, p.86.

179. CA, LM 21, 30 March 1719, p.99; CA, VC 21, 23 Jan. 1719, pp.9-10.

180. CA, LM 21, 31 July 1719, p.112. The disease was thought to have been caused by exceptionally cold and wet seasons.

181. CA, LM 22, Letters Despatched, 29 Jan.-30 Feb.(sic) 1722, 31 May 1722, p.100.

182. CA, VC 21, 8 Sept. 1721, pp.120-121; 25 Nov. 1721, p.159; E. Mossop, (ed.), *The Journals of Brink and Rhenius*, (Cape Town, 1947; Van Riebeeck Society, Vol. 28), pp.135-153.

183. CA, VC 21, 25 Nov. 1721, p.159.

few cattle and sheep.¹⁸⁴ According to a Khoikhoi informant Rhenius encountered at the Doorn River, the Namaqua were taking every precaution to prevent their remaining livestock from being bartered away, driving their flocks and herds into the mountains to hide them:

He added that for two successive years we had cleaned them out of all their cattle; that they were no more inclined to trade with the Company and if all their cattle were gone from them they would come and fetch cattle from the Dutch.¹⁸⁵

Rhenius was also told that the Khoikhoi had been robbed by the San and that, on hearing that the Dutch had come to take away their livestock, they had slaughtered and eaten their cattle in prodigious quantities, "saying that it was better to eat them than that they should be booty for others".¹⁸⁶

When Rhenius returned to the Cape with no livestock the authorities were quick to ascribe the failure of his mission to the bartering activities of the burghers. The person they most particularly blamed for this state of affairs was the man who held the contract to supply the Company with meat, Jacobus van der Heijden.¹⁸⁷ Van der Heijden had won this contract, or three-quarters of it in 1718 but, given the increasing difficulty in obtaining cattle and sheep, had come under considerable pressure to fulfil his obligations.¹⁸⁸ His predicament had not been improved when his cattle post at Rivier Sonder End was attacked by Khoisan on 29 January 1719 and 700 of his cattle had been stolen. Van der Heijden claimed that he had been robbed in retaliation for the actions of the Company's cattle-bartering expedition of 1718, the leader of which, Jan Feyerabend, had taken the cattle of the "Gauris en Hijkons natien" by force.¹⁸⁹ Van der Heijden was allowed to mount a commando to pursue the robbers but he cannot have been successful, for in February he was petitioning the Company for permission to buy the stock which Feyerabend had acquired! This desperate attempt to fulfil his contractual obligations was referred to the *Heren XVII* for their judgement¹⁹⁰ - thereby ensuring that their reply would be too late to be of any use to Van der Heijden. When the meat contract came up for renewal in October 1719 nobody wanted it and Van der Heijden was therefore allowed to continue to do his best for the

184. Mossop, *Brink and Rhenius*, pp.135-153.

185. *Ibid.*, pp.137-139.

186. *Ibid.*, p.143.

187. CA, LM 23, Letters Despatched, 1723-1725, 10 Sept. 1725.

188. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 5, 14 June 1718, pp.287-288.

189. *Ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1719, pp.329-330.

190. *Ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1719, pp.331-332; 28 Feb. 1719, p.336.

price of three stuivers a pound. Since, however, the supply of cattle and sheep showed no improvement Van der Heijden was forced to take more drastic measures.¹⁹¹

On 28 February 1723 the minister of the church at Drakenstein, Petrus van Aken, wrote an extraordinary letter to Governor de Chavonnes. It began with the sombre oratory of an Old Testament prophet:

Op dat wij geen stommen honden soudén sijn, die niet bassen können, soo geven wij aan Uwel Edelen plighs halve te verstaan hoe wiy uijt geloof waardige en vroomen menschen, sugtenden over de hemeltergenden zonden des lants, vernoomen hebben.¹⁹²

Van Arkel then proceeded to describe how Van der Heijden had equipped a party of seventy barterers - "wij willen seggen moordenaars en rovers" - who had no intention of bartering (since they had only been provided with 200 Rijksdaalders of goods) and who had journeyed to the "Gonakkens" (the Gonaqua near Algoa Bay in the eastern Cape). The colonists had then massacred them and carried off all of their cattle and sheep. Those Gonaqua who had survived the attack followed the aggressors, begging to be killed or taken captive so that they might not die of starvation. These details had been told to Van Arkel by some of the Khoikhoi who had accompanied Van der Heijden's men and who were deeply disturbed since they had never before seen so many corpses.¹⁹³

When the authorities heard this news it confirmed them in a decision which they had already made: that Van der Heijden should not be permitted to maintain the meat contract. With unintentional irony they declared that "he has never done much good in the slaughtering business and so deserves no favour above others".¹⁹⁴ The whole affair was reminiscent of the attack on the Gonaqua in 1702 - "The Christian Voyage" - in which Van der Heijden had also been involved.¹⁹⁵ As in the earlier case nobody was ever brought to account for their actions. The

191. Ibid., 2 Oct. 1719, p.369; 10 Oct. 1719, pp.373-374. In July 1722 the *Heren XVII* wrote to the Governor to order that in future the meat contract be fixed for a one year period only and that the price of meat be lowered to two stuivers a pound. They also stipulated that the contract should be open to all except Van der Heijden. Pressures like this help to explain Van der Heijden's desperation.

192. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 6, 9 March 1723, pp.287-288; CA, LM 19, 28 Feb. 1723. "That we should not be like dumb dogs that cannot bark, we dutifully inform you how we have heard from trustworthy and honest persons, sighing under the atrocious sins of the land..."

193. Ibid.

194. CA, LM 19, 23 June 1724.

195. See p.67 above. For Van der Heijden's complicity (or lack of it according to Fouché) in the 1702 affair see Fouché, *Adam Tas*, pp.333-337.

failure to prosecute was, according to Acting Governor Jan de la Fontaine, because there was not enough evidence but it is likely that the matter was dropped because influential colonists were compromised. The death of the man entrusted with the enquiry, the Independent Fiscal Cornelius Beaumont, did not help matters either.¹⁹⁶

Van der Heijden had probably sent some of his men to Little Namaqualand as well, to barter for livestock along the same lines as in Gonaqualand. The authorities were also suspicious of a certain Nicolaas Gockelius, to whom they had given permission in 1722 to barter for cattle from distant Khoikhoi or Xhosa on condition that he gave the Company 100 head of cattle. He had indeed delivered 100 head of cattle to the Company post at Groenekloof in May 1723, at which date no questions were asked, but the Little Namaqua had, in all probability, been his victims.¹⁹⁷ The appointment of new meat contractors, Jan Kruiwagen and Jacob van Bochem, did not bring stability to the meat supply for in May 1724 they had the misfortune to have some of their own cattle stolen from the specially reserved pastures of Groenekloof.¹⁹⁸ Though the robbers on this occasion were not Khoisan but *drosters*, or deserters, this simply served to emphasise how anarchic the northern frontier zone had become. In 1725 the Council of Policy decided to withdraw from the colonists the right to engage in barter with the Khoikhoi and this was reiterated by a *plakkaat* of 9 April 1727.¹⁹⁹ Immeasurable damage had, however, already been done.

In 1726 the *Heren XVII* were informed that apart from a single hut or two there were no Khoikhoi within fifty or sixty Dutch miles of the Cape, "for besides their having died off considerably, the small remnant has receded far inland, in order to save their trifling herds of

196. CA, LM 23, 10 Sept. 1725; De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 7, 1724-1728, 20 Feb. 1725, p.127. The informants were Jacobus Bota and the leader of the 1715 commando, Jan Harmse Potgieter. See CA, LM 19, 5 April 1723.

197. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 6, 29 Sept. 1722, p.209; 11 May 1723, p.319. In September 1725 the Governor explained to the *Heren XVII* that Rhenius' ill success at cattle bartering in Namaqualand "must be ascribed to the last free barter by the persons sent out by the burghers Jacobus van der Heyden and Nicolaas Gokkelius, for as soon as the Hottentots saw any of the Company's men approaching, [they] fled into the mountains over inaccessible tracts, without wishing to enter into any agreement to barter ... hence we hope and humbly pray that it may please you to withdraw this permission to free barter". CA, LM 23, 10 Sept. 1725.

198. CA, LM 23, 12 May 1724.

199. The Council of Policy decided to withhold permission to barter livestock even before it received the *Heren XVII*'s reply. On 28 April 1727 the Council informed the *Heren XVII* that, in accordance with the instruction of the letter of 20 July 1726 "we have expressly, by Plakkaat of 9th inst., forbidden private barter with Hottentots". CA, LM 24, 28 April 1727.

cattle from the mortality which has been raging here some years ago".²⁰⁰ Quite clearly those Khoikhoi within reach of the colony were no longer able to protect or maintain their flocks and herds. Their poverty, which had been precipitated by the violent acquisitiveness of the colonists, made it even more difficult for the Company to resolve the meat supply crisis.

The Khoikhoi retreat into the interior, however, served only to draw the cattle hungry colonists after them. By the mid-1720s, therefore, one may conclude that the characteristic features of the northern frontier zone were well established and the dynamics of colonial expansion irreversible. Despite prevarications and contradictions in both practice and policy the colonial government had allowed settlers to appropriate both land and livestock from the Khoisan societies of the interior. A pastoralist frontier, whose existence was dependent on continual expansion, was thereby inaugurated, as was the creation of a new group - the *trekboers*. For the Company the political implications of this socio-economic expansion were already clearly apparent - a loss of control over its subjects and a proliferation of violent confrontations between Khoisan and colonists. Despite half-hearted attempts to investigate and censure the more unacceptable instances of rapacious cruelty, the Company was itself responsible for the systematic despoliation of the Khoisan; by permitting settlers to occupy their land; by authorising official livestock "bartering" expeditions whilst preventing, or attempting to prevent, unofficial expeditions from taking place; and by defending the colonists against the determined resistance which resulted from these actions. The devastating smallpox epidemic of 1713 had been a further blow to the integrity of Khoisan societies already reeling from the processes of colonial conquest. Increasing numbers of deracinated Khoikhoi adapted to the insecurity of the times by entering the service of white farmers. Here they enjoyed a dubious protection, subject to the violence of masters whose impulses to cruelty flourished virtually unchecked in the lawless context of a rapidly expanding frontier zone. As the colonial frontier expanded, however, it not only moved into more hostile terrain but even further beyond the protective reach of the Company. The consequences did not take long to become manifest: intensified Khoisan resistance and increased rebelliousness amongst the colonial frontiersmen themselves. The interplay of these two factors forms the subject of the following chapter.

200. CA, LM 24, Letters Despatched, 5 Jan. 1726-27 July 1728, 25 Feb. 1726, p.30. The resolutions of the Council of Policy also mention the scarcity of livestock amongst the Khoikhoi. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 7, 30 April 1726, p.259.

Resistance, Rebellion and War: The Northern Frontier Zone, 1725-1740

THE ORIGINS OF THE FRONTIER WAR OF 1739

The re-closure of the livestock trade to freeburghers had come too late to protect the Khoisan of the south-western Cape. Nor did it do anything to arrest the continuous northwards expansion of the colonial stock-farmers, for in 1725 the first loan-farms were allocated over the Piekeniers Pass in the Olifants River Valley.¹ This meant that white settlement had now crossed the open plains of the Swartland and dared to penetrate the mountainous, isolated world beyond. It was a significant moment for it indicated that certain colonists were now confident enough to risk living in a terrain that gave every advantage to potential stock-thieves. The dense bush and rocky mountain slopes surrounding the Olifants River impeded horses and provided ample shelter for those seeking to elude commandos. Yet it would seem that in 1725 the prospects of Khoisan resistance appeared negligible. By 1732 the entire length of the Olifants River had been colonised for there were loan-farms as far north as the confluence of the Olifants and Doorn Rivers, as well as at the Widouw River.²

Beyond the Olifants River the aridity of the Knegtsvlakte and the Hardeveld discouraged further settlement and white farmers therefore turned their attention to the east and the west. The high mountains of the Cedarberg and Bokkeveld,³ combined with the unalluring Onder Karoo behind them,⁴ discouraged direct easterly expansion. At the southern end of these mountains, however, lay the fertile valleys of the Warm and Koue Bokkeveld and it was at about this time that loan-farms were first claimed in these districts.⁵ North of the mountains, in the area which became

1. In September and October 1725 Arnoldus Johannes Basson, Francois Smid and Johannes Ras registered "de groote vallij", "de klijne vallij" and "de lange vallij" respectively. These farms were described as being "over" or "aan" the Olifants River. CA, RLR 6, pp.53, 24, 53. The Piekeniers Pass is the pass which ascends the Olifants River Mountains and joins the Olifants River Valley to the Swartland. The name derives from the fact that soldiers, including pikemen ("piekeniers"), were posted there in order to stop the movement of hostile Khoisan.

2. By 1732 there were some thirty farms that had been registered or re-registered in the Olifants River Valley. It was Hendrik Crugel (or Kruger) who took out a farm at the "Wiedouw". CA, RLR 9, 4 Nov. 1732, p.339. See also Philippus Lodewikus Scholtz, "Die Historiese Ontwikkeling Van Die Onder-Olifantsrivier 1660-1902", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1966, Vol. 2, pp.29-30.

3. See Chapter 2, notes 52 and 53, for the origins of these mountains' names.

4. The Onder Karoo, also known as the Tanqua Karoo and the Ceres Karoo, is the arid stretch of land between the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld mountains.

5. See Chapter 2, note 52.

known as the Onder Bokkeveld, the Khoisan presence was still considerable in the 1720s and 1730s. In these years the Onder Bokkeveld was simply too far away for the small number of pioneer colonists to risk settlement. The alternative was to turn westwards, towards the Sandveld.

The Sandveld of the western Cape coastal belt has always been a dry region. The undulating, sand-covered, coastal plains receive less than 300 mm of rain per annum but the environment in the 1720s was undoubtedly less harsh than it is today. Two hundred and fifty years of overgrazing and overexploitation of natural resources has impoverished a region which once supported herds of game, including elephant and rhinoceros. The vleis were rich in fish and bird life whilst hippopotamus were so common that the Verlorevlei was once known as the Seekoei Valleij. Hunters could also gather abundant marine resources, in the form of mussels and crayfish, as well as *veldkos* in the form of berries or corms.⁶

On the eve of colonial intrusion the principal human occupants of the region were hunter-gatherer groups, which had had at least 1500 years of interaction with neighbouring pastoralists.⁷ It has already been noted that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the San of this region were considered to be clients of the Little Namaqua,⁸ and they had no doubt come to some arrangement with local pastoralist groups as well. In the better-watered southern parts of the Sandveld, particularly along the Verlore, Lange and Jakhaals Vleis, dwelt the pastoralist Grigriqua, a group considered by many to have been, originally, San, and who were, in any event, also clients of the Little Namaqua.⁹ In 1682 Olof Bergh had encountered some of them near the site of present day Graafwater and in 1705 Starrenburg had visited Captain Hannibal's kraal at the Lange Vlei.¹⁰ These pastoralist groups would have moved about within the Sandveld, in search of water and grazing, and would, perforce, have had to share the landscape with the hunter-gatherers. Although archaeological evidence suggests that, following the advent of pastoralism in the area, there was some displacement of San from their usual haunts,¹¹ there is also clear historical

6. See Anthony Manhire, *Later Stone Age Settlement Patterns in the Sandveld of the South-Western Cape Province, South Africa* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.18-32 for an environmental survey of the region.

7. Ibid., p.127.

8. See Chapter 2, p.

9. Ibid.

10. E.E. Mossop, (ed.), *Journals of Olof Bergh (1682) and Isaak Schriver (1689)*, (Cape Town, 1931), p.95; E.H. Raidt, (ed.), *Francois Valentyn: Description of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it* (Amsterdam 1726; reprint Cape Town 1971), 2 vols, Vol. 2, pp.23-25.

11. Manhire, *Sandveld*, pp.106-127. See also Royden Yates, Anthony Manhire and John Parkington, "Colonial era paintings in the rock art of the South-Western Cape: some preliminary observations" in Martin Hall and Ann Markell, (eds), *Historical Archaeology In The Western Cape: The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, Vol. 7, June 1993, pp.59-70 and Royden Yates, Anthony Manhire and John Parkington, "Rock Paintings and

evidence of co-operation between the hunters and herders of the Sandveld. Under the disruptive pressures caused by colonial expansion the distinctions between various Khoikhoi and San groups became even more confused. Consequently, if there is any one area in the Cape where the use of the term Khoisan is appropriate, it is in the Sandveld in the early eighteenth century. Significantly, it was from this ancient zone of interaction between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers that there occurred the most determined opposition to white settlement since the establishment of the colony.

There had been colonists grazing their stock at the Verlore Vlei from the beginning of the eighteenth century whilst white hunters had been active in the area from an even earlier date.¹² Violence had threatened during the Overny incident of 1714 and had indeed broken out a year later when a punitive commando had campaigned, somewhat unsuccessfully, behind the Piketberg.¹³ In 1716 the Company succeeded in negotiating some sort of peace with the Sandveld Khoisan. This peace was obviously still in effect in 1724 when Hendrik Moel, the most northerly loan-farmer, undertook to search for the survivors of a ship-wreck to the north of the Olifants River mouth.¹⁴ But by 1728 it was evident that fighting had flared up again. In December of that year the authorities at Cape Town received information that the cattle of a certain Jan Valck had been stolen from his farm at Lange Vlei in the Sandveld.¹⁵ Valck was a wealthy freeburgher who, in addition to his Lange Vlei farm, had farms at the Jackhals Vlei (north of the Lange Vlei) and at Klapmuts (near the Company's important cattle post). Valck seems to have had a partnership of sorts with one Jurgen Hanekom, who also had farms at Klapmuts and Lange Vlei.¹⁶ It is thus possible to sketch the lineaments of an economic network which linked the frontier regions, via wealthy freeburghers, to an important distribution point in the Company's meat supply system.

History in the South-Western Cape" in Thomas A. Dowson and David Lewis-Williams, (eds), *Contested Images: Diversity in Southern African rock art research* (Johannesburg, 1994), pp.29-60.

12. The first mention of the Verlore Vlei in the loan-farm records is in 1723 when it is recorded that Hendrik Moel registered "de Verloore Valije agter de Picketberg". CA, RLR 5, 3 Dec. 1723, p.112. It is, however, hard to believe that the Vlei was not utilised before this by colonists farming at the northern end of the Piketberg, something which had been happening since at least 1709. CA, RLR 1, p.166.

13. See chapter two, pp.81 above.

14. Moel had farms at the Piketberg and also "de Verloore Valije agter de Picketberg". CA, RLR 5, 3 Dec. 1723, p.112. See also G.C. de Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 7, 1 Feb. 1724, pp.20-21.

15. CA, LM 20, Letters Received, 1726-1732, 19 Dec. 1728.

16. For the connection between Valck and Hanekom see CA, LM 20, 24 Jan. 1729. This source also mentions their Klapmuts, Lange Vlei and Jakhaals Vlei farms. For Valck and Hanekom's loan-farm holdings around this time see CA, RLR 6, 4 Aug. 1725, p.44; 1 Sept. 1725, p.53; 22 Nov. 1726, p.100; 14 March 1727, p.115; CA, RLR 8, 29 Nov. 1728, p.151; 21 March 1729, p.231; CA, RLR 9, 1 Sept. 1730, p.8. Valck was also the owner of the farm "Elsenburg" at Stellenbosch and a member of the church committee. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 8, 1729-1734, pp.178, 274. Hanekom, for his part, owned the farm "Nattevalleij" in Drakenstein. Ibid, p.299, n.172 and 173.

Valck himself does not appear to have resided in the Sandveld for he left the supervision of his farms to his three step-sons: Jan, Jacobus and Leendert Louw.¹⁷ More specifically it was brothers Jacobus and Leendert who looked after the livestock of both Valck and Hanekom at the Lange and Jackhals Vleis. To be even more precise it was they who entrusted the livestock to the care of some of the local Khoikhoi.¹⁸

When these Khoikhoi were robbed of their charges by a group of so-called Bushmen in December 1728 the Louw brothers gave chase with the assistance of some of the other frontier farmers of the area. It is worth mentioning the men by name for many of them were to play a large part in the events of the next twelve years. Accompanying Jacobus and Leendert were Daniel Bokkelenberg, Jan Pienaar, Abel Pienaar, Willem van Wyk and Marten Hilbrand, the *knecht* of Matthys Krugel. The commando caught up with the robbers and ordered them to return the stolen cattle. According to Jan Louw there were over three hundred "Bushman" and they were confident enough to reply that they first wished to fight for them, forthwith showering the colonists with arrows and assegais. Bokkelenberg was wounded in the foot by an arrow but Willem van Wyk fired a shot which killed two of the Khoisan. This did not stop the others from continuing to shoot arrows and hurl assegais. The burghers then loosed a volley which killed ten of the Khoisan and put the rest to flight. The stolen cattle, twenty-three in number, were recovered as well as sixty-two others which the vanquished Khoisan had abandoned. Apparently some of these animals had been stolen from the Guriqua. It is not clear what became of these cattle but presumably they were sent with the rest to Klapmuts and handed over to the Company.¹⁹

The governor approved of the action taken by the commando but it later appeared as though it had taken more than the sixty-two cattle initially claimed.²⁰ On 5 January 1729 two Khoikhoi men came before the governor to complain that they had had their cattle stolen by the commando and that the livestock was in the possession of Hanekom and Leendert Louw at Lange Vlei. The story seemed credible and Governor Noodt therefore ordered Lourensz, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, to investigate the allegations.²¹ Lourensz was an energetic man and accompanied the Khoikhoi complainants to the Lange and Jackhals Vleis. At Valck's Jackhals Vlei farm the Khoikhoi identified seven of their cattle and thirty-one of their sheep. These animals were being

17. Valck, a childless widower, married Maria van Brakel, the widow of Jacobus Louw, and hence regarded her three sons as his children. See C.C. de Villiers and C. Pama, *Geslagsregisters van die Ou Kaapse Families*, Vols. 1 and 2, (Cape Town, 1966), Vol. 1, pp.90 and 501; Vol. 2, p.1005.

18. CA, LM 20, 19 Dec. 1728.

19. Ibid.

20. CA, LM 25, Letters Despatched, 27 July 1728-30 Dec. 1732, 26 Dec. 1728, pp.249-250.

21. CA, LM 25, 6 Jan. 1729, p.251.

tended by the local San and one of Valck's slaves. The slave explained to Lourensz that three of the cows belonged to Marten Hilbrand and the rest to Daniel Bokkelenberg. The sheep belonged to Bokkelenberg and Abel Pienaar. When Lourensz was able to question Bokkelenberg and Hilbrand they both denied that the animals were theirs though Bokkelenberg claimed that one of the bulls was a gift from the San.²² Leendert Louw also professed his innocence, claiming only one of the animals, a heifer, which he maintained was a gift from a San by the name of Jantje. The explanations of Bokkelenberg, Hilbrand and Leendert Louw were endorsed by Willem van Wyk, whom Lourensz described as being the superintendent of Jackhals Vlei. According to Van Wyk the livestock had been found in the veld by a Khoikhoi herder named Dragonder but neither Dragonder nor Abel Pienaar could be found to corroborate the story.²³

What emerges from the above information is that there was close collaboration between the frontier *trekboers* and their Khoisan allies. Some of these allies were later to become bitter enemies of the colonists for we learn from later sources in 1739 that the most active leaders of Khoisan resistance in that year were Swaartbooij and his son Titus, alias Charmant. Swaartbooij, according to Jan Valck (who had by this stage become a member of the Heemraad), was a "Captain ... who has lived with my children for a long time".²⁴ It is therefore safe to assume that in 1728 Swaartbooij and Titus were working for Valck at the Lange and Jackhals Vleis.

It is also interesting to note that the registered owners of the loan-farms in question were not themselves to be found at the frontier and that the actual occupants of the farms were sons, servants, slaves or Khoisan herders.²⁵ Presumably wealthy men, such as Valck and Hanekom, spent most of their time at their properties closer to the Cape and left the less well-to-do to manage their frontier interests. The frontier farmers, for their part, protected the stock of their employers and concentrated on accumulating flocks and herds of their own. It may be seen that force and theft were ways of doing so though they could also expect to keep a percentage of the natural increase of their master's livestock. If all went well they could, in time, aspire to registering a loan-farm for themselves.

22. CA, LM 20, 24 Jan. 1729.

23. Ibid.

24. CA, Council of Policy (hereafter C) 455, Inkomende Briewe, 9 July-9 Dec. 1739, 23 July 1739. "...die lange tyd by sijne kinderen gewoon hadde".

25. The case of Daniel Bokkelenberg is interesting for despite his prominence in the Sandveld there is no record of him having a loan-farm there. He was only twenty-one years of age in 1728 and yet he later became the owner of three farms in Drakenstein. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, p.2, n.8.

On this occasion the governor felt that he did not possess sufficient evidence to act against the Sandveld frontiersmen and, despite prodding Lourensz to obtain more information, the matter rested.²⁶ Perhaps some of the unrest of 1728 was a consequence of the severe drought of the winter of that year which reduced grazing and water resources and produced "great mortality amongst the cattle".²⁷ The Council of Policy explained to the *Heren XVII* that the Company was particularly short of trek-oxen. These animals played a vital part in much of the Company's work and at least eighty or ninety young oxen of four years of age were needed. This quantity was, however, unobtainable from the colonists, who were also suffering from an acute shortage of trek-oxen. Nor were the Khoikhoi, with the exception of the Namaqua, likely to be able to supply the necessary quantities. But since a bartering expedition to Namaqualand would require large numbers of oxen in the first place, in order to draw the wagons required for logistical support, the Namaqua could not be a solution either. The Council of Policy therefore implemented a scheme that gradually increased the size of the Company's herd of trek-oxen but which simultaneously increased the demand for these valuable creatures. Every two years stock-farmers were now expected to pay three four-year-old trek-oxen to the Company as payment for their loan-farms, instead of the previous twelve Rijksdaalders per annum. This system of payment was still in operation as late as 1769 and is testimony to the perennial shortage of trek-oxen within the colony.²⁸

At the same time as the complaint about the shortage of trek-oxen the Council of Policy also noted that the impoverishment of the Company's cattle had been caused by a decline of pasturage due to overgrazing. Private persons had been grazing their cattle too near to the Company's posts and the Council was therefore obliged to withdraw the leases of those whose loan-farms were too close to Company pastures.²⁹ Those who were displaced were granted land further afield, no doubt contributing to the competition for resources in the Olifants River and Sandveld districts.

Khoisan resistance continued with attacks on colonial farms in 1731. On 12 February of that year a group of Khoisan known as the "ten sons of Grebnan" (or "Greibenau"), who had earlier robbed the burgher Frederick van Eeden, drove away thirty-three cattle belonging to Hans Jurgen Potgieter.³⁰ After six days a commando of twelve colonists succeeded in tracking the robbers to

26. CA, LM 25, 14 Feb. 1729; CA, LM 20, 12 June 1729.

27. CA, LM 25, 31 Jan. 1729.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. One of those who had to abandon a loan-farm at this time was J.M. Kruywagen, junior, whose farm at "de Sonquas fontein" was judged to be too close to the contracted butchers". CA, RLR 5, p.90.

30. CA, LM 20, 8 March 1731; De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 8, 13 March, 1731, pp.143-144.

their kraal whereupon the Khoisan began to stab the cattle to death. A warning shot was fired and the sons of Grebnan responded by shooting arrows at the Dutch. Their fire was returned and six of them were killed whilst others were wounded. Ten cattle were recovered alive. A woman and three children were taken captive and later sent to colonists over the mountains ("over bergh") because, it was explained, the husband of the woman was still alive.³¹ This, it would seem, is the first recorded instance of what was later to become a common occurrence: the capture of women and children by commandos and their subsequent placement as labourers within the colony. On this occasion one of the Khoisan who had managed to survive the fight shouted to the commando from the safety of a kraal that though they might take away some cattle there were others that they would have to leave behind, dead, in the kraal. "We Bushmen have still more people, and will not leave the Dutch in peace," he added defiantly.³²

In replying to this news the governor told Lourensz that in future, when such incidents occurred, he should not write about them but report them in person so that no time was lost in responding appropriately.³³ It is perhaps as a consequence of this instruction that records from the frontier zone are sparse until, in 1738, events of such magnitude took place that they could not be covered by the verbal reports of the *landdrost*.

The attacks made by the Khoisan on colonists north of the Piketberg in 1738 and 1739 were part of the ongoing process of resistance to the expansion of the colonial frontier. What was unique about the resistance which commenced in 1738 was its magnitude and ferocity. Its instigators were men who had been living with and working for some of the frontier farmers for several years. Not only did these Khoisan have particular and personal grievances to motivate their resistance but their knowledge of Dutch and the use of firearms, acquired whilst servants, gave them valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of their opponents. In many instances ex-masters fought ex-servants, a fact which increased the bitterness of the fighting.³⁴

As mentioned above, two of the Khoisan who worked for Jan Valck were prominent in the resistance: Swaartbooi and his son Titus, alias Charmant.³⁵ Their war against the

31. CA, LM 20, 8 March 1731.

32. Ibid.

33. CA, LM 25, 13 March 1731, p.375.

34. See N.G. Penn, "The Frontier In The Western Cape, 1700-1740", in John Parkington and Martin Hall, (eds.), *Papers in the Prehistory of the Western Cape, South Africa* (Oxford, 1987), Vol. 2, p.476. Scholtz fails to note that the instigators of the "Bushman War of 1739"(as he calls it) were ex-servants of the colonists. He also fails to remark on the connection between the expedition to the Orange River (which he seems to have overlooked) and the outbreak of hostilities. Scholtz, "Onder-Olifantsrivier", pp.35-40.

35. See p.95 above.

colonists had its origins in 1738 when, before the ploughing season, Swaartbooi, Titus and some other Khoisan accompanied a group of ten colonists to Namaqualand. The party had ten wagons laden with powder, lead, iron, copper, beads and other trading items. It is likely that the sponsors of this illegal expedition included wealthy men with connections in the northern frontier zone - men such as Jan Valck and Jurgen Hanekom. Their involvement, though never proved, is made even more likely by the fact that Willem van Wyk, the superintendent of Valck's Sandveld farms, was a member of the expedition. The other colonists in the party were Lodewyk Pulter, Hendrik Ras, Matthys Willensz, Jacob Swart, Frans Campher, Andries van der Walde, Sybrand van Dyk, Augustus Lourens and Jan Gous.³⁶

After successfully bartering some cattle from the Little Namaqua, the expedition left these in the safe-keeping of a servant, Jantje, and proceeded to the land of the Great Namaqua across the "Groot" or Orange River.³⁷ Here they stayed for a month at the kraal of Gal, a chief of the Great Namaqua. This expedition is notable not so much because it was illegal but because it is the first recorded expedition of Europeans to the Orange River.³⁸ Other Europeans, in search of ivory, had certainly preceded them here, (indeed they were joined by a certain Pieter de Bruyn who had been out elephant hunting before them),³⁹ but none had left a record, nor had so baleful an influence, as Van Wyk and his fellows.

During their stay at Gal's kraal, the colonists occupied themselves with bartering cattle from their hosts whilst Willem van Wyk "took to wife, Hottentot fashion, a near relative of the chief, conducting himself in this matter and clothing himself at the time as a Hottentot".⁴⁰ This act of

36. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March 1739, pp.256-7.

37. See chapter 8 below.

38. Popular opinion is that Jacobus Coetzee was the first European to reach the Orange River in 1760. See for instance J.M. Coetzee, *Dusklands* (Johannesburg, 1971), p.115 and *Reader's Digest Atlas of Southern Africa* (No place, 1984), p.29. The records of the Council of Policy are, however, quite explicit: "Capn. Gaaren verhaald wijders dat over een geruijmen tijd geleeden eenige Europeanen, voorsien met wagens en verseld met andere Hottentotten, bij zijn vaders coraal, geleegen bij de soogenaamde Groote Revier, sijn gekoomen...". De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March 1739, p.258.

39. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March 1739, p.257. It is of interest to note how frequently Pieter de Bruyn's brother went out on ivory hunting expeditions according to CA, 1/STB 13/31, *Alphabetiese Lyst Van Persone Wat op Veldtogten zyn uijt gegaan beginnende met Nov. 1737 (1736-1744)*.

40 "...en dat inmiddele den landbouwer Willem van Wyk na der Hottentotten wyse een nabestaende van gemelten capn. der Groote Namacwas getrouwt en sig bij dat geval in alles als een Hottentot gedraagen en gekleet heeft". De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March, p.257. Van Wyk underwent a Namaqua initiation ceremony ('t Kammi) to make him a member of the tribe. This is described by H. Cloete in a letter to Hendrick Swellengrebel junior. Since the ceremony involved being urinated upon Van Wyk became quite famous in the colony and at the time of his death, in 1777, was known as Willem Namaqua. See G.J. Schutte, *Briefwisseling Van Hendrik Swellengrebel Jr Oor Kaapse Sake 1778-1792* (Cape Town, 1982), Cloete to Swellengrebel, 27 Feb. 1779, pp.73-74. For Khoikhoi initiation ceremonies see A.B. Smith and Roy H. Pfeiffer,

amity would appear to have been a ruse on Van Wyk's part, however, for when the time came for their departure the colonists slipped secretly away and instructed their servants to return to the kraal, attack the Great Namaqua, and carry off their cattle. This order the servants were willing to obey since their masters promised them a share of the loot and provided them with firearms for the occasion. In the subsequent surprise attack at dawn seven of the Great Namaqua, including Captain Gal, were killed and their cattle driven away. The expedition then returned to the Piketberg area but stopped along the way to attack the kraal of Arisie, a captain of the Little Namaqua. Arisie's wife was shot, her baby wounded, and another member of the kraal killed. In both of these attacks the "Hottentot Keyser", described as living with the farmer Hendrik Kruger, was prominent. So too was the "Hottentot Claas Kok" who was, in all probability, an ancestor of a family which would later become famous throughout the northern frontier zone.⁴¹

On returning to the vicinity of the Piketberg the colonists failed to honour the agreement which they had reached with their Khoisan servants. Instead of compensating their murderous employees with cattle, they hid some of the stolen livestock in secret kloofs and redistributed the rest amongst friendly neighbours (whose numbers doubtless contained some sponsors of the expedition). The cheated servants, led by Swaartbooi and Titus, went to report the matter to the authorities at the Cape. Their story was corroborated and amplified by the evidence of Plato, Vulcanus and Arisie, captains of the Little Namaqua,⁴² as well as by Captain Gaaren, son of the late Captain Gal of the Great Namaqua, who, having survived the attack on his father's kraal, had journeyed all the way to Cape Town to seek justice.⁴³

Though the Council of Policy only recorded the evidence of the Namaqua in March 1739 they became aware that all was not well in the northern frontier zone long before then. On 22 October 1738 Lourensz, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, reported that the cattle of the farmer Augustus

"Col. Robert Jacob Gordon's Notes On The Khoikhoi 1779-80", *Annals Of The South African Cultural History Museum*, Vol. 5, no.1, Feb. 1992, pp.10-20.

41. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, pp.257-259.

42. In 1705 three Captains of the Little Namaqua called Plato, Jason and Vulkaan had made peace with the Company. See Chapter 2, p.21.

43. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March 1739, pp.256-258. The resolutions note that Gaaren's trip had been accomplished "...met veel moeite en niet sonder verhinderende hem en zijn bijhebbende volk door deese en geene landbouwers op den weg aangedaan...". Perhaps it was Gaaren's deputation that was observed by the French Lieutenant Gennes de la Chanceliere whilst he was at the Cape in 1739. He noted that they were camping out with their wives and families on the glacis of the Castle, and that they "sang and danced around the town howling like wolves and mumbling songs with strange tunes. The men played upon a reed flute and the women kept time with their [hands]". In Maurice Boucher, *The Cape of Good Hope and foreign contacts 1735-1755* (Pretoria, 1985), pp.43-44.

Lourens had been stolen by "der bosjemans wonende omtrent de Kleyne Namaqua".⁴⁴ Since Augustus Lourens had been one of the members of the expedition to the Namaqua, and since the "bosjemans wonende omtrent de Klyne Namaqua" were precisely those people from whom Swaartbooi and Titus came, there is every reason to suppose that this robbery was their idea. The "bosjemans" numbers were too great for those colonists who pursued them to recapture the cattle. But the farmers sent forward a Khoikhoi servant to ask the robbers why they were stealing them. The answer was as follows:

dat siy sulx dreden om hun uit haar land te verjagen dewijl sij in haarlieden land woonen en dat dit maar een begin was, dog dat sij alle de daaromtrent woonende menschen sulx souden deen, en wanneer dit niet soude helpen en sij niet en vertrokken sijreden als dan alle het gesijde coorn dat thans op het veld is staande, als het rijp was, souder verbranden, dat sij soo doende wel genoodsaakt souden wesen om haar land te verlaten.⁴⁵

This was clearly a declaration of war. The hostilities which commenced with this attack were to escalate until, in 1739, the scale and ferocity of Khoisan resistance exceeded all previous opposition to Dutch colonialism in southern Africa. At this early stage, however, the government's response indicated that they were not unaware that some of the colonists might have provoked the attack. A *veldkorporaal*, Andries Burger, was appointed for the district over the Olifants River. His instructions were to attempt to make peace with the "bushmen" in the best and least costly manner and to make a thorough investigation into the origins of the disturbances. An additional three *veldkorporaals* were appointed - for the Bokkeveld, Goudini and the Olifants River - but it was specified that these men should not themselves have been involved in the current upheavals in any way since the Council of Policy wished to be sure that "van onse zijde geen oorsaak is gegeven waardoor dit volk soude moogen weesen aangeset om soodanige disorders als de geene die nu zijn geschied, te pleegen".⁴⁶ Such moderation was commendable but probably influenced by the great difficulty that would be experienced were it necessary to send a commando so far to the north.

44. "The bushmen living near the Little Namaqua". CA, C 651 Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1737-1739, 20 Oct. 1738; CA 1/STB 13/4 Krygsraad Resolusies, 1729-1739, 28 Oct. 1738; De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 23 Oct. 1738, p.234.

45. "...that they did this in order to drive them out of their land and that this was just the beginning, and that they would do the same to all the people living there, and that if they would not leave they would burn all the wheat that was growing in the veld as soon as it ripened so as to cause them to leave their land". In P.J. van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, p.8.

46. "On our side no cause has been given to urge these people to commit such disturbances as have taken place." CA, C 651, 20 Oct. 1738; CA 1/STB 13/4, 28 Oct. 1738; De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 23 Oct. 1738, p.234.

Further evidence that there was a spirit of rebellion amongst the Khoisan servants of the northern frontier zone came in November 1738. Two Khoikhoi servants of Gerrit Mos, a Piketberg farmer, slaughtered four of his sheep and hid the carcasses. The two men, Wittebooij and Wilschut, then summoned a third, David, and three female companions for a feast. Unfortunately they were discovered by one of Mos' slaves and felt obliged to kill him. Having done so Wittebooij and Wilschut began to live dangerously. They stole sheep from Pieter van Zyl's farm at the Olifants River and broke into Jacobus Louw's Jackhals Vlei farmhouse where they stole a tinder-box, a knife, flints and bread. From Albert van Zyl's farm they managed to steal a musket and decided to put it to good use by going to the Olifants River with their friends in order to shoot the aforesaid Van Zyl. Wittebooij was entrusted with the task but missed his target. The group was then forced to take flight but did not escape capture.⁴⁷ We may presume, however, that other disgruntled servants succeeded in joining forces with larger groups of Khoisan rebels and added their numbers to the insurrectionary movement.

As further rumours and reports concerning the activities of the expedition to the Namaqua reached the authorities they decided, in January 1739, to authorise Carel Christoffel Countitz, the substitute *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, to confiscate any cattle that he thought had been acquired illegally and to command the offenders to appear before the Council of Justice.⁴⁸ In attempting to carry out these instructions, however, Countitz succeeded in causing a great deal of dangerous resentment amongst the frontiersmen. His task could not have been an easy one for the stolen cattle had been redistributed amongst the herds of a number of people in order to make identification more difficult. Countitz undoubtedly made some mistakes but he had a pretty shrewd idea as to the identity of the offenders. In this he was aided by the confessions of Matthys Willemsz and Pieter de Bruyn, who had been under arrest in the Castle for a "considerable time" before they were identified by Captain Gaaren in March.⁴⁹ Willemsz and De Bruyn had revealed that well over 1000 cattle had been stolen from the Namaqua and, in the light of this figure, the 279 cattle confiscated by Countitz do not seem to be an excessive number.⁵⁰ At a later date the governor was to receive a complaint from the farmers Hendrik Kruger (whose servants had participated in the attacks on the Namaqua), Sybrand van Dyk, Hendrik Ras and Arnoldus Basson. They complained that Countitz had taken not only the "bartered" cattle but also a large number belonging to themselves and to other people.⁵¹ A thorough investigation by Lourensz into

47. CA, Court of Justice (henceforth CJ) 786, Documents in Criminal Cases, 27 Nov 1738, pp.198-204.

48. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 4 March 1739, p.255.

49. Ibid., 13 March 1739, p.258.

50. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, 19 Jan. 1740, pp.2-4.

51. Their evidence suggests the remarkable extent to which frontier farmers and neighbours mixed their herds together whilst grazing. To give only one example, of the twelve cattle confiscated from Hendrik Kruger eleven

Counitz's behaviour, undertaken by the *landdrost* at a later date, did not reveal that Counitz had erred greatly in executing his instructions. The case of the memorialists was also seriously weakened by the injudicious claims of Sybrand van Dyk who maintained that eighty-eight of his own cattle had been confiscated even though the *landdrost* well knew that "the said Van Dyk never possessed eight head, to say nothing of eighty-eight; and if he did have them he must most certainly like his comrades, have stolen and bartered them from the Hottentots".⁵²

The way in which their cattle had been acquired was, however, of less importance to many of the colonists than the fact that Counitz, with Khoikhoi assistants, was busy confiscating them. On 24 January Counitz was obliged to report to Lourensz that certain people were refusing to obey his orders.⁵³ What made this disobedience especially alarming was that it coincided with the appearance of a notorious trouble-maker in the northern frontier zone: the deserted Company sergeant, Estienne Barbier. Under Barbier's leadership the smouldering resentments of the frontier colonists were fanned into an alarming outbreak of rural rebellion and social banditry. In order to understand how this came about, however, it is necessary to discuss Barbier and the concept of social banditry in greater detail.

THE BARBIER REBELLION⁵⁴

Estienne Barbier was born in France, in the village of Bazorches, near Orleans, in 1699.⁵⁵ By 1734 he had joined the Company as a soldier for he sailed from Zealand in June 1734 and arrived at the Cape in October of the same year. In June 1735 he appeared on the muster-roll as a sergeant, a very rapid and desirable promotion, for the life of a common soldier at the Cape could

belonged to Jacob Swart and one to Herman Narlo. CA, C 1101, *Memorien en Requesten*, Letter from Hendrik Kruger, Sybrand van Dyk, Hendrik Ras and A.D. Basson, 24 July 1739, p.33. There is also evidence to suggest that some of the stolen cattle were temporarily deposited at local Khoikhoi kraals to allay suspicion. *Ibid.*, pp.135-136. Among the stolen cattle was a cow of the Khoikhoi Captain Keyser and, if we can believe Jan Valck, two calves in his possession had been obtained from Captain Swartbooi without his having known that he was doing wrong. CA, C 455, *Inkomende Briewe*, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 12 Aug. 1739.

52. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, 19 Jan. 1740, pp.2-4.

53. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 4 March 1739, p.255.

54. See Nigel Penn, "Estienne Barbier: An Eighteenth Century Cape Social Bandit?", *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 14, 1, June 1988, for a fuller discussion of the issue.

55. Professor Roy Henry Pheiffer has collected together the most important documents written by or pertaining to Estienne Barbier and presented them in his doctoral thesis, "Die Gebroke Nederlands Van Frans-Sprekenders Aan Die Kaap In Die Eerste Helfte Van Die Agtiende Eeu" (University of the Witwatersrand, 1976). He has also subjected them to a linguistic and historical analysis, providing the first accurate outline of Barbier's life. I have preferred to use his clear type-scripts of the documents rather than the originals in certain instances. The thesis has been published under the same title (Cape Town, 1980) but where I quote from Professor Pheiffer's collection I shall cite his thesis pagination. Thus, Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, p.14.

be one of great hardship, characterised by brutal punishments and grinding poverty. This promising start came to an abrupt end when, in May 1737, Barbier had the temerity to accuse his immediate superior, Lieutenant Rudolf Sigfried Allemann, of embezzlement.⁵⁶ What Barbier was objecting to was the customary practice of those in authority at the Cape to extract as many perquisites and advantages from their offices as possible. The issue at stake was not whether such practices were illegal - they were - but whether the right people were being bought off. Notwithstanding the disgrace of Willem Adriaan van der Stel at the beginning of the century, graft and corruption were widespread amongst Company employees. This was something that Allemann and the various officials of eighteenth century Cape society understood very well. It was not something, however, that Barbier found acceptable and by raising his voice against the system he fell foul of it.

Barbier's principal charges against Allemann were that the lieutenant had cheated soldiers by depriving them of a portion of their *pasgeld* and that he had been selling Company firewood to certain burghers.⁵⁷ As *Commisarius*, or Inspector, of the Company's *buiten-posten*, Allemann was well placed to indulge in some private trading on his own account. The *buiten-posten* were, at this stage, the most advanced outposts of Company authority in the Cape and, as such, served as focal points for a variety of interactions between Khoisan, outlying frontiersmen and soldiers. Buying, selling and the exchange of goods took place whilst the labour of the soldiers at the outposts could be directed to profitable side-lines.⁵⁸ Despite orders prohibiting Company officials from taking part in private trade, the practice was so common at the Cape that it was considered a perquisite rather than a speculation. This was especially true of the post of Inspector of the *buiten-posten*. Even Allemann's loyal supporter and biographer, Mentzel, admitted that Allemann

56. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, pp.16-19.

57. A major source of information on Barbier is O.F. Mentzel, *Life At the Cape In Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Biography of Rudolf Siegfried Allemann, Captain of the Military Forces and Commander of the Castle In the Service of the Dutch East India Company At the Cape of Good Hope* (Cape Town, reprint 1919). Allemann was Mentzel's patron when the latter served as a soldier at the Cape between 1732 and 1741. Mentzel's account, first published in 1784, is biased in Allemann's favour but, nonetheless, an invaluable source of information. From Mentzel we learn that *pasgeld*, or *dienstgeld*, was the money which was paid by those soldiers who were able to earn money by practising a trade to those who were not so fortunate. Since the salaries paid to soldiers at the Cape were not sufficient for them to exist on they were obliged to supplement their income by accepting non-military employment. Quite obviously not everyone could be exempted from sentry duty so the custom was for the *pagangers* to pay nine guilder, twelve stuivers monthly to be divided among the rest of them. Mentzel, *Allemann*, p.37.

58. For the role of the *buiten-posten* see Sleigh, "Die Buiteposte In Die Ekonomie Van Die Kaapse Verversingstasie". See also Carmel Schrirer, "Excavating Archives at Oudepost 1, Cape", *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 16, no.1, June 1990, pp.11-21 and Nigel Penn, "Excavating Archives at Oudepost: A Riposte", *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 17, no.1, June 1991, pp.101-5.

probably made at least forty guilder a month out of this position.⁵⁹ Thus when Barbier produced statements from seven burghers who swore that Allemann had sold them wood, bast or reeds, the inspector of *buiten-posten* was able to declare that: "The Governor de la Fontaine, Adriaan van Kernel and Mijnheer Van der Henghel were all aware of what he was doing, and that it was in a way allowed as a reward for his trouble as Country Commissioner."⁶⁰ Indeed, had Allemann been so injudicious as to elaborate, he would have been able to demonstrate that not only had the previous governors, Van Noot and Van Assenburgh, acted in the same way, but so had the current independent fiscal (Van der Henghel) and governor (Swellengrebel) when they had held the post.⁶¹ With such illustrious examples to appeal to in mitigation (and so many reputations at stake) it was hardly likely that Allemann would be found guilty or that Barbier would be allowed to proceed with his accusations.

A second reason why Barbier's case against Allemann was not investigated with greater vigour was that Allemann was a very good personal friend of the fiscal, Van der Henghel. In fact it was during Barbier's trial, on 20 September, that Van der Henghel became, for a short time, governor of the Cape. The circumstances of his appointment illustrate the corrupt and venal world of Cape politics at its worst. There is a sense in which Barbier's charges of official thieving came at a particularly delicate time since they coincided with an extremely unsettled period in the Cape's administration. There were no fewer than four changes of governor between August 1737 and April 1739. De la Fontaine retired in August 1737 to be succeeded by the *secunde*, Adriaan van Kervel. Van Kervel died on 16 September 1737, and an ungraceful struggle for the governorship ensued between Van der Henghel and Swellengrebel, the *secunde*. Ordinarily Swellengrebel should have become the governor, by virtue of his being the *secunde*, but Van der Henghel objected to this on the grounds that he, as senior upper-merchant, had a better claim. To an overbearing and dictatorial disposition Van der Henghel could add the claim that he was an educated Nederlander instead of being a simple Cape-born product like Swellengrebel. He could also offer bribes to prospective followers from the notoriously fat pickings of the fiscal office as well as the promise of even greater rewards in the future. Swellengrebel, however, was worth a fortune, for his father was a wealthy German immigrant. In the short term it was Van der Henghel's bullying that won the day for he convinced the Council of Policy to submit the question to the drawing of lots. He won. But in April 1739 the *Heren XVII* appointed Swellengrebel in his place, prompted, it was rumoured, by a handsome present.⁶²

59. Mentzel, *Allemann*, p.74.

60. Mentzel, *ibid.*, p.114.

61. Mentzel, *ibid.*, p.114; Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, pp.21-22.

62. Mentzel, *ibid.*, p.106; M.W. Spilhaus, *South Africa In The Making, 1652-1806* (Cape Town, 1966), p.106.

With all this jockeying for position it might seem as though Barbier could have found some powerful allies but since his evidence was injurious to all, he was an embarrassment to all. There was, however, political capital to be made from the influential Allemann who was badly in need of a powerful friend. His guilt was widely acknowledged publicly and in order to escape further humiliations he became a fervent supporter of Van der Henghel, making him a present of his own riding horse, the only snow-white horse in the Cape.⁶³ The new governor responded by increasing the legal pressure on Barbier in order to crush him and suppress his accusations.

Barbier was placed under civil arrest, facing charges of having slandered Allemann, whilst a protracted, futile and costly legal process found Barbier's evidence to be inadmissible. Following an angry outburst in the court he was locked up in the Castle's "donker gat" for twenty-one days and, whilst suffering incarceration, the case Allemann contra Barbier was decided in the former's favour. Barbier was ordered to apologise to Allemann in a humiliating public ceremony and pay the legal costs. This Barbier refused to do and, as soon as he emerged from his cell, he appealed against the sentence. This time he proposed to appeal over the heads of the Cape officials to Batavia even though his official request to do so had to go through the local Council of Justice. Permission was granted but there was one snag. Copies of the court proceedings had to be sent to Batavia and Barbier had to pay for this expense. The cost, it transpired, was thirty-two Rijksdaalders and three skillings - a great deal of money for someone like Barbier who had already had to sell his watch and clothes. Barbier, however, agreed to pay this to the secretary of the Council of Justice, De Grandpreez, from his forthcoming *goedemanden* pay. By the time payment fell due though, on 21 February 1738, Barbier had had a chance to read the copies and was shocked to see that they did not reflect the word for word proceedings of the court. He realised that the official version of proceedings would not win him justice if the papers ever reached Batavia and announced that he intended laying a charge against De Grandpreez. This, however, was impossible without the permission of the Council of Justice and Barbier at last realised that he had exhausted all legal channels.⁶⁴

In a long letter which Barbier wrote over a year later to Governor Swellengrebel he mentioned that there was a French saying which helped to explain his next move: "La fin, fait sortir le loup hoors du Bois - de honger jaagh de wolf uijt de Bosch".⁶⁵ As Barbier slipped out of the Castle on the night of 24 March 1738 anything must indeed have seemed preferable to the dark thickets of the law.

63. Mentzel, *ibid.*, p.107.

64. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, p.24; Vol. 2, pp.98-101, 112-118.

65. "Hunger drives the wolf from the forest".

Like many other fugitives before him Barbier headed northwards. His first stop was the farm "De Rode Blom" on the outskirts of town and from there to Isak Nieuwout's farm in the Tygerberg. The next stage of his flight took him to Drakenstein where he spent a night at the farm of the widow of Lowies Leriche. Finally he reached "Orleans", the farm of the widow "Silje" or Celliers where he was to stay until February 1739.⁶⁶ Perhaps Barbier might have been content to live in rustic obscurity with a widow who spoke his mother tongue, but towards the end of February a group of ten or twelve armed men, filled with resentment towards the government, rode by the farm. The disaffected colonists were those who had had "their" cattle confiscated by Cunitz and his Khoikhoi assistants. Barbier, who heard that "they wished to raise a rebellion", offered them his services.⁶⁷ There was still something deep within him that hated the idea of injustice and although the grievances of the rebels were rooted in rural issues, with which Barbier had not previously been concerned, he was quick to make their cause his own by acting as their spokesman. His literacy and leadership soon placed him at the head of these rural rebels. His career as a social bandit had begun.

Before proceeding to a more detailed consideration of Barbier's involvement with the rebellious farmers of the northern frontier zone it is necessary to explain social banditry and suggest reasons for its importance. Though the northern frontier was to experience many instances of pure and simple banditry and was, at a later stage, to be terrorised by groups which appeared to be classic bandit gangs - such as the Afrikaner gang - the Barbier rebellion was different. According to Hobsbawm, the pioneer historian of the concept, social banditry is a primitive form of social protest which is "a universal and virtually unchanging phenomenon ... little more than endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty: a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of individual wrongs. Its ambitions are modest: a traditional world in which men are justly dealt with, not a new and perfect world".⁶⁸ The "ideal" bandit is someone who does something which is regarded as criminal by the State or the local rulers, but who is not considered to be a criminal, or to have acted against local conventions, by the population. He is protected by the people, though he is frequently a lone wolf living on the margins of society. If he forms a band of followers, this band is usually small and held together only by his personal magnetism. If he robs, he is usually obliged to conform to the Robin Hood stereotype since "there is more to take from the rich than from the poor, and if he takes from the poor or becomes an 'illegitimate' killer, he forfeits his most

66. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, pp.25-27; Vol. 2, pp.12-14.

67. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.14.

68. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959), p.5.

powerful asset, public aid and sympathy".⁶⁹ When he can he is free-handed with his gains. As a social protest movement banditry is "inefficient in every way" being incapable of effective guerrilla organisation and archaic in siding with doomed, obsolete forces. Though it occurs amongst peasant societies which "know rich and poor, powerful and weak, rulers and ruled" these societies remain "profoundly and tenaciously traditional, and pre-capitalist in structure".⁷⁰

These then are the broad patterns of social banditry. Part of Hobsbawm's interest in the phenomenon stems from the universality of these patterns. But underlying these forms is the deeper significance of content. What does social banditry represent? For Hobsbawm it is a predominantly rural response to the process of being broken into modern society. It is a form of primitive rebellion against the world of capitalism which "comes to them from outside, insidiously by the operation of economic forces which they do not understand and over which they have no control, or brazenly by conquest, revolutions and fundamental changes of law whose consequences they may not understand, even when they have helped to bring them about".⁷¹

Hobsbawm has not been without his critics, and his theory of social banditry has been severely qualified or modified by several writers. Blok, for instance, points out that Hobsbawm has exaggerated the element of social protest in banditry as well as obscuring the ties which link the bandit to other groups, classes or networks.⁷² Austen, in particular, believes that Hobsbawm has minimised the role played by the state in defining social banditry. Without a state, to put it crudely, there can be no social banditry. This is of particular relevance to the African historical experience - about which Hobsbawm has nothing to say - because it was not always necessary for deviant groups to enter the category of criminals opposed to a general political authority. As Austen says:

They can instead resort to, or be confronted with, a process of segmentary self-help. Thus instead of "cops versus robbers" we may have community pressure against individuals, feuds between community segments, or the separation of dissident groups to form an entirely new state. In other words, for criminals to become social heroes - or more significantly, for heroes to become criminals - there must not only be poor classes who resent the rich, but also a political system claiming hegemony over both the rich and the poor.⁷³

69. Ibid., pp.19-20.

70. Ibid., p.8.

71. Ibid., p.3.

72. A. Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1972, Vol. 14, No.4, pp.494-505.

73. R. Austen, "Social bandits and other heroic criminals: Western models of resistance and their relevance for Africa", in D. Crumney, (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London, 1986), p.89.

Austen's point is that in Africa - as opposed to Europe and Asia, from which Hobsbawm draws most of his examples - the states were usually too weak to define and delimit criminality.

A further related problem is that in Africa the coming of the capitalist world economy (against which social banditry is a rebellion) frequently coincided with the arrival of the colonial frontier. Austen cautions that:

We need to make a distinction between frontiers within a given social system, and the situation of "interpenetration between two previously distinct societies", which is the African colonial frontier. The former gives rise to banditry as one means of contesting the values that were to be deployed in controlling economic and political life. The latter produces "primary resistance" in which no institutions or repertoire of values are shared between the two sides.⁷⁴

As we shall see, Barbier's rebellion qualifies as social banditry by meeting both of Austen's requirements. Though the wider context of the rebellion was indeed the African colonial frontier, Barbier deliberately placed himself within (or on the margins of) the social system of Cape colonial society and against the general political authority of the capitalist VOC. In this he was to differ from the notorious Oorlam gangs who operated along the Orange River at a later date. Whatever the exact status of such gangs was, it is clear that, at the height of their influence, they operated outside of and against Cape colonial society.⁷⁵

There is one further set of objections to Hobsbawm's concept of social banditry which has to be considered before it can be imported into an African context. These objections centre around the two pre-conditions which Hobsbawm sees as being necessary for the existence of social banditry: (1) a social environment constituted by a traditional peasantry; and (2) a "precapitalist" or "preindustrial" social environment. O'Malley, who identifies and dismisses these two preconditions, rightly draws our attention to the vagueness of Hobsbawm's use of the term "peasantry".⁷⁶ For Hobsbawm, peasant types can range from the communal peasantry of mid-nineteenth century Russia to French peasantry "who operate in a framework of bourgeois institutions and law, especially property law, most likely as individual commodity producers, possibly shading over to commercial farmers".⁷⁷ Such a broad definition of peasantry, as O'Malley notes, clearly permits the penetration of a capitalist productive order. It is, therefore,

74. Ibid., p.91.

75. See chapter 9 below.

76. P. O'Malley, "Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism and the Traditional Peasantry. A Critique of Hobsbawm", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1979, Vol. 6, No.4, pp.489-501.

77. E.J. Hobsbawm, "Peasants and Politics", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1973, 1, p.4.

extremely difficult to talk about a "traditional peasantry" when the matrix of social banditry is precisely that period of the peasantry's history in which it is being "modernised" or transformed. Rather than defining the support base of social banditry as being a "traditional peasantry", it is more accurate to state that "social banditry presumes as one of its conditions of existence chronic class struggle which permeates the social and geographical terrain of the bandit". In order for this "chronic class struggle" to support social banditry, it has to be manifested in a "unified conflict consciousness among direct producers" - "be they all peasants, or an admixture of sharecroppers, labourers, small-scale cash croppers or whatever".⁷⁸

Corrigan, however, has noted that this unified conflict consciousness need not necessarily be determined by common class membership since "particular producers in specific situations embody social relations and think thoughts about their experiences of labouring with others against enemies natural and human".⁷⁹ These are important and useful distinctions to make for it would be very difficult to describe Barbier's rural supporters as being "peasants", still less as "traditional peasants". Moreover their communal unity was, as we shall see, as much a product of conflict with the Khoisan as it was of class conflict. Though they thought of themselves as being of the rural poor, they certainly did not wish to make common cause with the even worse off Khoisan.

There is one final point to make about Hobsbawm's stricture that social banditry occurs within essentially "pre-capitalist" or "pre-industrial" (also vague terms) societies. What Hobsbawm is really trying to draw our attention to, O'Malley insists, is that social banditry occurs in societies where "more effective mechanisms for articulating social protest" are lacking. He is arguing that only with the emergence of modern capitalism does one find the rise of institutionalised movements representing the interests of direct producers.⁸⁰ It is certainly worth bearing this point in mind for, as we turn to a more detailed examination of Barbier's rebellion, it is obvious that nothing propelled him into his short career as a social bandit more strongly than the refusal of the authorities to listen to his complaints.

On 24 or 25 February 1738 Barbier met with nine or ten of the angriest frontiersmen at the farm of Johannes Ras near "de Paerl". Johannes was the elder brother of Hendrik Ras, one of those who had been on the expedition to Namaqualand, and obviously closely involved in the whole

78. O'Malley, "Social Bandits", p.492.

79. P. Corrigan, "On the politics of production: a comment on "Peasants and Politics" by Eric Hobsbawm", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1975, Vol. 2, p.346.

80. O'Malley, "Social Bandits", p.492.

affair. Barbier helped the protesters to compose and write a letter of complaint to Swellengrebel who was, at that moment, occupying the position of President of the Council of Justice. Though Barbier did not sign the letter (significantly only two out of nine signatories could write - the rest made crosses) he later confessed to having written it at the request of those present. The letter was a sharp attack on *Landdrost* Lourensz, who was accused of having stolen the cattle of the undersigned, and it was requested that Swellengrebel would order Lourensz to return the livestock forthwith. A remarkable feature of the letter was the inclusion of quasi-legal Latin terms, which Barbier had obviously picked up during the course of his long series of litigations. Such language was quite beyond the comprehension of the illiterate farmers whom Barbier now represented but by using it he must have enhanced his prestige greatly and encouraged them to believe that the law was on their side. Johannes Ras was despatched to deliver the letter to the relevant authorities at the Cape and the petitioners waited to see the result of Barbier's handiwork.⁸¹

Ras' reception at the Castle was less than cordial. Van der Henghel, the governor, was tempted to arrest him whilst Swellengrebel advised him to take the matter up with the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch. Since it was precisely this person against whom the complaint was lodged this did not appear to Ras, Barbier or their companions to be the best course to adopt. Instead they resolved to emulate the founder of the reformed religion and nail their grievances to the church door.⁸²

It must have come as a most unpleasant surprise to the authorities to learn that Estienne Barbier, whom they presumed to have escaped to Holland as a stow-away, had resurfaced. On, Sunday 1 March 1738, the deserted sergeant appeared at the head of a group of armed and mounted men to read a seditious statement to the congregation of the church of Drakenstein as they came from their devotions. Having read his "Avis of great importance" - whose language was as rude as its message was subversive - Barbier compounded his crime by nailing the paper to the church door, an expressly forbidden act since the government had reserved this particular channel of communication for itself.⁸³ What was in the document and who was behind Barbier?

There was a very close connection between those involved in the expedition to the Orange River and those who followed Barbier to the Drakenstein church. The government was informed that amongst those with Barbier at the church were Hendrik Kruger, Lodewyk Putter, Frans Campher,

81. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, p.28; Vol. 2, p.15. De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 2, pp.753-754.

82. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol.1, p.29.

83. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 4 March 1739, pp.255-256.

Arnoldus Basson, Hendrik Ras, Jan Olivier, Sybrand van Dyk and Johannes Ras.⁸⁴ Putter, Campher, Van Dyk and Hendrik Ras had all been on the expedition in person whilst Kruger had despatched his servants. Arnoldus Basson was related to the Putter family whilst his wife, Catharina Olivier, was the sister of Jan Olivier.⁸⁵ Quite obviously there were extensive family interests tied up in the disputed livestock but the "Avis" did not simply confine itself to the issue of confiscated cattle.

Though Barbier had written the document he had not been without advisors and it represented a significant departure from the letter he had sent to Swellengrebe. Its list of grievances was comprehensive and it may be taken as a fair reflection of the issues that were causing resentment amongst colonists on the Cape frontier.⁸⁶ The "Avis" was aimed at a community of "Afrikaner brothers" and its first complaint concerned the issue of the payment of twenty-four Rijksdaalders per annum for a loan-farm. According to Barbier and his constituents this fee was ruining the farmers. The doubling of loan-farm rentals in 1732 had obviously not been easily absorbed by a significant sector of stock-farmers. In fact, the people whom Barbier represented questioned the very legality of loan-farm rental itself, claiming that its institution had never been announced by public edicts (*plakkaten*), and disputing the obligation to put down a deposit on leasing a farm. The people held responsible for these evils were the "rulers" and the "principal ruler". Barbier took care to distinguish between the *Heren XVII* (whose laws were just) and the "roguish and damned wilfulness of our rulers". In this he was conforming to the essentially reformist ideas of primitive social protest, seeking to restore an imaginary traditional order. This order, he believed, was expressed in the Company regulations of 20 October 1687, which instructed officials at the Cape to provide prospective farmers with as much land as they could use and to equip them with the necessary items to start farming.

Times had changed. According to Barbier the governor was now a protector of "Scoundrels, idlers, and whip-branded thieves", as well as a participant in robberies against honest freeburghers. What rankled in particular was that the governor and the *landdrost* (described as the "King of the Rogues") chose to believe the words of "unbaptised hottentots, who know

84. See G.M. Theal, *Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten*, Deel 1 en 2. Verscheidene Historische Dokumenten Betrekkende Hebbende Tot Den Oproermaker Estienne Barbier (Cape Town, 1896), p.5.

85. Putter's mother, Zacharia Visser, had re-married Johannes Basson, the father of Arnoldus Basson. Arnoldus was married to Catharina Olivier, Jan Olivier's sister. De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 2, p.667, 743. Andries van der Walt had worked as a *knecht* for Arnoldus Basson (1735-1737) and Jan Olivier (1737-1740) whilst Willem van Wyk was probably married to the step-sister of Frans Campher. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusie van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 13 March 1739; 21 March 1739, pp.256-260, n.79, n.80, n.84, n.100, n.105.

86. A copy of the "Avis" may be found in Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, pp.26-29 and in Theal, *Dokumenten*, pp.1-4.

nothing of salvation or damnation" and stole the cattle of the colonists so as to distribute them amongst their "hottentot cronies". This had encouraged the Khoisan to believe that they now had more rights than the colonists and the subsequent spate of robberies was thus a direct result of the government's interference. "And in addition the hottentots wish to violate the worthy Christian women: Saying that they have nothing to fear: alleging that the *landdrost* shall listen to them rather than to the Christian people".

These violently anti-Khoikhoi sentiments and the exaggerated fears that "Hottentots" were getting above their station are a fascinating glimpse into the racial attitudes of frontier colonists at the time. As potential rapists of white women the Khoikhoi were clearly perceived to be desirous of crossing a cultural barrier which the colonists wished to remain impenetrable and inviolable. The emphasis on the heathenish nature of the Khoikhoi served to remind the authorities that they were essentially "other" than the Christian colonists and hence unsuitable recipients of even-handed ideas of justice. The government, in treating the Khoikhoi as though they were equal to Christians, was threatening the very identity of the colonists by exposing their women to sexual violation.

After this attack on the government's allegedly pro-Khoikhoi policies, the "Avis" returned to the theme of the great difficulty experienced by aspirant farmers in making a beginning. Soldiers and sailors who were discharged from Company service with the intention of working for someone else (i.e. becoming a *knecht*) or leasing their own farm were obliged (or their employers were) to pay a fee to the governor. The best part of their labours was then spent in paying back to the governor the interest on the money they had borrowed. Hundreds of young men and women (according to Barbier) found themselves unable to contemplate marriage, either because they had no prospects of being able to afford a farm or because they would have to pay too much to the governor.

The document went on to list some of the corrupt trading practices of the governor and his officials, and it concluded by urging the colonists to cease paying deposits or rent for their loan-farms; to cease paying money to obtain *knechts* and to submit a list of all claims against the government for forwarding to Holland so that they could be reimbursed and the "roguish acts of our land" exposed.

Whilst it is difficult to prove that the government was insisting on "deposits" or percentages of money over and above the rental of twenty-four Rijkdaalders per annum, it is highly likely that

in this, as in everything else, the administration was corrupt.⁸⁷ What is not in contention is that young men were finding it difficult to acquire loan-farms and become independent farmers (though it is doubtful whether the marriage rate diminished as a result).⁸⁸ It is significant that none of the colonists who went on the expedition to the Orange River had loan-farms of their own.⁸⁹ This was not, of course, just because of the cost of the rental but because of other expenses involved in farming - hence the attraction of stealing Khoikhoi cattle.

A further stumbling block to aspirant farmers was that it was very difficult for newcomers to relax the tight control which the Company exercised over the meat market through the agency of monopolies granted to the privileged few. This was a point raised as early as 1715 in a memorandum drawn up by Frans van der Stel, the brother of Willem Adriaan.⁹⁰ Although Frans' main target in his memorandum was Henning Huising, the holder of the Company meat *pacht* and the sworn enemy of the Van der Stels, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the details provided. The Company meat contractor was able to enjoy exclusive rights to an immense area of land some seven or eight Dutch miles from Cape Town. This area, known as Groene Kloof, was about 300000 morgen or 100 square Dutch miles in extent. It was well watered, richly pastured and close to the market. "It can therefore be imagined", wrote Frans van der Stel:

how many thousands of sheep it was possible to breed in that fruitful quarter ... and how at a public lease no-one at the Cape can supply meat at a lower rate than Huysing, or whoever may be in the possession of the Groene Kloof, as it almost costs him nothing, excepting the maintenance of the overseers, slaves, and the expense of a few additional trifles, hence it may be seen with what little difficulty those who depasture cattle there are able to supply meat to the Company at thirteen doits per pound... From this it must also follow that the poor burghers cannot sell any cattle to the butcher, who himself owns so much cattle that he cannot sell all.

If poor people were allowed to settle at Groene Kloof, continued Frans van der Stel: "This course would also introduce more equality among the agriculturalists and cattle herders and prevent that the one is made to depend too much on the other, as otherwise the poor will be the slaves of the rich, so that two or three men of means might easily form a large cabal..."⁹¹

87. See p.116 below for further evidence of deposits on loan-farms.

88. Robert Ross has commented on the high growth rate of the free population of the Cape Colony which was largely due to the low age at first marriage of women. See R. Ross, "Capitalism, Expansion and Incorporation on the South African Frontier", in H. Lamar and L. Thompson, (eds.), *The Frontier in History* (New Haven, 1981), pp.217-218.

89. This observation is based on a study of the *Oude Wildschutteboeken* (RLR).

90. CA, LM 18, Letters Received 1709-1718, 17 April 1715.

91. Ibid.

Though it might seem ironic that such fears should be voiced by one who had himself belonged to precisely such a cabal, Frans van der Stel, "een Pest voor de Kaap",⁹² knew what he was talking about. Wealthy, well-connected men could edge out the poorer colonists and make their access to land and money more difficult. Although Barbier did not specifically identify or attack a cabalistic elite in his "Avis" there is a constant implicit criticism of those who worked hand in glove with corrupt officials and in some of his subsequent statements this criticism became far more explicit.

For the time being, however, Barbier's message was quite subversive enough. The government was informed of events outside the church, as well as of the identity of the instigators and the content of their proclamation, by J.M. Friek, messenger of the Court in Paarl.⁹³ Realising that with such a programme Barbier would be able to command a great deal of support, the authorities decided to act as swiftly and tactfully as possible in order to nip the revolt in the bud. The first step was to declare Barbier to be an outlaw ("vogel-vry" in the Dutch) and to issue instructions for his apprehension - dead or alive. The second step was to try to separate Barbier from his followers by issuing the latter a pardon if they abandoned him and gave themselves up within a month.⁹⁴ This proclamation was pinned to the church door and almost immediately torn down by Barbier himself - another crime. But it is a measure of his local popularity that he was able to do so without being arrested.

Barbier and his followers had been hiding out at the Piketberg since 1 March but they returned to Paarl, armed, on 16 March. They had received notice that the *heemraden* of Stellenbosch wished to discuss things with them and decided to risk an encounter.⁹⁵ The first *heemraden* they encountered were Theunis Boota and Charles Marais. These gentlemen suggested that the meeting take place the next day at the farm of the *heemraad*, Hendrik van der Merwe. After some discussion Barbier and his followers decided to keep the rendezvous, but fearing an ambush by the *landdrost* and a commando, took the precaution of remaining well armed and in the open. Eventually they were persuaded to go to the farm house where there were five or six *heemraden* present.⁹⁶

92. Fouché, *Adam Tas*, pp.112-113.

93. Theal, *Dokumente*, p.5.

94. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 21 March 1739, p.259.

95. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.65.

96. Ibid. At a later date Barbier's prosecutors were to make a great deal out of the words he uttered whilst going to this meeting when his followers feared an ambush: "Neen kinderen; het en is geen swaerigheijd; want wij ben goed gewaep".

According to Barbier's account of proceedings, Captain Jan Louw accused him of being a seducer of the common people. Barbier's supporters quickly sprang to his defence, saying: "You are not a traitor, but in reality our good father, because you have helped us, and with justice; and you have opened our eyes to the truth; and without you we should all have been taken for scoundrels if you had not come to our rescue".⁹⁷

Even if this speech was never actually made, it is a revealing indication of the way in which Barbier viewed himself. A further point of interest is the way in which Barbier expressed ideal political relationships. His model was an essentially paternalistic one - and this he shared with his supporters - of a good father looking after his children. At various places in his writings he describes good rulers as being "fathers" and appeals to them to protect their children. In this, as in many other of his actions, Barbier allowed hope to triumph over experience. Captain Jan Louw, however, was certainly no good father, for Barbier accused him of having neglected to forward letters of complaint from the colonists. These letters had been given to Charles Marais, who had in turn given them to Louw, where they had stopped. Barbier went on to castigate Louw and the other *heemraden* for having permitted Matthys Willemsz and Pieter de Bruyn to be arrested without cause. Warming to his theme he then demanded to know why the government no longer paid each colonist who attended the compulsory annual military drill at Stellenbosch three Rijksdaalders for expenses. Finally he returned to the question of the confiscated cattle, demanding their return. When Louw cautioned that only some of the cattle might be returned, Barbier launched into a blistering attack on the absent *Landdrost* Lourensz and his chief henchman, Louw: "You damned Piet Lourensz, you scoundrel: Why did you order my livestock to be stolen: My house to be burnt, my wife to be violated; with your damned brothers the hottentots; and you would not give back all of my livestock; why have you allowed me to be robbed?"⁹⁸

This outburst clearly contained fearful fantasies of future occurrences as well as present grievances of the frontiersmen and it is remarkable how Barbier assumed the collective identity of the people whom he championed. He also seemed to assume that Louw himself was as good (or as bad) as Lourensz and when Louw objected that he was not the *landdrost*, and that Barbier should not speak so strongly against him, the reply was: "If you are not the Landdrost: in this case you are his principal; or you are the King of the Hottentots himself."⁹⁹

97. Pfeiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.70.

98. Ibid., pp.73-74.

99. Ibid.

From the above it may be seen that Barbier had a highly developed sense of the dramatic, casting himself as both champion of the people and public prosecutor. Though the account he gives of his own words and deeds may have been heightened for effect there is good evidence that Barbier was indeed intemperate in his use of language. It may seem surprising that Barbier should delight in recording these outbursts of his, particularly since they are found in a letter (or book, so great is its length), written to Swellengrebel (who was appointed as governor in April 1739) asking for pardon. The letter was probably written in August¹⁰⁰ and its tone may be explained by Barbier's assumption that Swellengrebel would be ill disposed towards any of Van der Henghel's consorts - and in Barbier's estimation Lourensz was "King of those rogues". By attacking the ex-governor's cronies so vigorously, Barbier was counting on winning the new governor's support.¹⁰¹ In addition, Barbier obviously found the exercise of writing about his case extremely cathartic. On paper, at least, he could shout down the corrupt traducers of the land, scoring great victories in debate, backed by the people's will and incontrovertible evidence.

After lecturing the *heemraden* on their duties and suggesting that the *landdrost* had turned them into "Hottentoten Hemeraden", Barbier stated his demands: a free pardon for himself and his followers; the return of the stolen cattle or eight Rijksdaalders per head for those which were not returned; compensation payment for the inconvenience caused to those whose cattle had been confiscated and the release of De Bruyn and Willemsz. If this was not done, threatened Barbier, he would burn them and their houses whilst sparing their women and children. Some of the *heemraden* seemed to be suitably chastened by Barbier's sermon and in words that echoed the Bible, acknowledged that though he spoke the truth "they who speak the truth; have no haven". Barbier replied that though truth had no home in this country he would take it to the Fatherland.¹⁰² Charles Marais, who up to this point had backed Barbier's statements with the fervour of an acolyte, was suddenly accused by Barbier of being an "idler" and of having paid ex-Governor de la Fontaine 100 sheep in order to secure a loan-farm. Marais acknowledged the fact and Barbier used this as evidence to illustrate the obstacles facing poor colonists who wished to acquire farms.¹⁰³

The meeting ended with the *heemraden* promising to deliberate with the *landdrost* on 19 March. Once they had done so the Council of Policy was informed of events. They decided, on 21 March,

100. Ibid., Vol. 1, p.39.

101. For the idea that Barbier was trying to exploit ill feeling between Van der Henghel and Swellengrebel see Mentzel, *Allemann*, p.107 and Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p. 107.

102. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.77.

103. Ibid., p.78.

that there would be no pardon for Barbier. They realised, however, that it would be impossible to capture him or his followers, all perfect horsemen and shots, in an extensive country peopled with rebel sympathisers. Instead they offered a free pardon to anyone or any number of people, whether guilty of cattle thefts, barter, or following Barbier, if they delivered him into the hands of justice. Du Bruyn and Wilemsz were released on condition that they helped to capture Barbier.¹⁰⁴

It is some measure of Barbier's popularity that this offer did not result in his immediate apprehension. The Council of Policy therefore decided to defuse the burgher discontent by going back on its word to the various Khoisan complainants. On 31 March the government had passed a resolution which allowed the injured parties to take back any cattle which they recognised as being theirs from amongst those confiscated by Cunitz and assembled at the Company cattle post at Groene Kloof.¹⁰⁵ On 28 April, however, it was decided to re-confiscate the cattle, which had just been returned to Plato, Vulcanus, Arisie, Gaarm, Swaartbooij and Titus on the grounds that "the Council has been informed that the cattle in no way belong to them, or has ever been taken away from them, as they have falsely asserted".¹⁰⁶ This complete *volte-face* was quite contrary to the expectations of the Namaqua who, on their departure from the Cape, had been provided with food, tobacco, arrack, "trifling presents of beads" and, in the case of Gaaren, a staff of office.¹⁰⁷ Whilst such decisions went a long way towards reconciling the colonists to the Company they had quite the opposite effect on the Khoisan.

THE FRONTIER WAR OF 1739

On 20 April 1739 news was received in Stellenbosch that the livestock of Leendert Louw, Tobias Mostert's widow and Johannes Mostert had been stolen by "hottentots onder aan de kant van d' Olyphants Rivier en die Jackhals Valley".¹⁰⁸ From the Bokkeveld came reports that the cattle of Schalk van der Merwe had been stolen too. The reports added that Tobias' *knecht* and three slaves had been killed in the attack.¹⁰⁹ Details which were later supplied by an old servant who had witnessed the attack were that about 100 Khoisan ("Hottentots" in the original) had arrived at Louw's farm and attempted to steal the cattle. The *knecht* had shot and killed one of the robbers, putting the rest to flight. Next day, however, they returned with five of the Bokkeveld Khoikhoi

104. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 21 March 1739, pp.259-262.

105. Ibid., 31 March 1739, p.263.

106. Ibid., 28 April 1739, pp.265-266.

107. Ibid. Also 13 March 1739, pp.258-259.

108. CA, C 651, Dag Register Van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein 1737-1739, 20 April 1739; CA, C 454, Inkomende Briewe, March 1739-July 1739, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 30 April 1739.

109. Ibid.

who had muskets and killed the *knecht*. They then stole seven muskets from the house as well as powder and lead, kidnapped two slaves, drove away as many cattle and sheep as they could whilst stabbing others, including a horse, to death. As many as 500 of the 1500 sheep and 70 of the 108 cattle at the farm were taken.¹¹⁰

There is every reason to suppose that Swaartbooij and Titus were behind this attack even though they were not in the Sandveld at this time. In the first place the Jackhals Vlei area was their territory and in the second place there is the testimony of a Khoikhoi from the Olifants River against them. This man was questioned, as to who the cause of the trouble was, by members of the commando which was sent to avenge the robberies:

gaf mij denselven tot antwoord Charmant (alias) Titus, Swarte Booij, Pokkebaas Claas en Jantje Keekelaar, op het welke ik denselven voorheid dat zulx niet konde weesen, terwijl die Hottentotten sig aan de Kaap bevonden, daar dien Hottentot op repliceerde dat de eevengem. vier Hottentotten sulx aan haar natie aan de hand gegeven hadden ten tijde dat den substituijt laddrost sig in het Bockenvelt bevond om van de aldaar woonende landbouwers haar vee af te haalen, en dat zij Hottentotten als doen beslooten hadden dat soo draa gem. substituijt het boovenstaande verrigt hadde en haarl. afgegeeven zijn soude, het hun beloofde vee, sij bij haar te rugkomst de uitterste veeposten soudon aandoen, de mans vermoorden, de vrouwen wegvoeren en het buscruijt en loot meede genoomen hebbende, sij sig in 't vervolg bij malkanderen craalsgewijse soudon houden.¹¹¹

A general panic began to spread throughout the northern frontier zone as colonists drove their livestock southwards and abandoned their farms. Reports of robberies and rumours of murders swept from one lonely farm to another. It was heard that the Khoisan had threatened to drive all Europeans south of the Berg River. At the height of the disturbances ten farms were burnt and a further forty-eight abandoned. Over 700 cattle and nearly 3000 sheep were swept away and the Khoisan responsible for this had at least thirteen muskets between them.¹¹²

110. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 2 June 1739, p.272.

111. Ibid., p.275. "he replied Charmant (alias Titus), Swarte Booij, Pokkebaas Claas and Jantje Keekelaar, to which I replied that this could not be since those Hottentots were at the Cape, to which the Hottentot replied that the above mentioned four Hottentots had suggested it to their nation at the time when the substitute-landdrost was in the Bokkeveld in order to take their cattle from the farmers who lived there, and that the Hottentots had then decided that as soon as the substitute had done so and returned their cattle to them, they would visit the furthest stock-posts, murder the men, carry off the women, take the powder and lead and thereafter gather together kraal-wise".

112. Ibid., p.276; CA, C 651, 20 April 1739; CA, 1/STB 3/8, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interrogatosien (Krimineel) 1740-1741, Jacobus Gildenhuysen to Landdrost, 30 Aug. 1739.

The frontier was in flames. By attempting to defuse a burgher rebellion the Council of Policy had done a great deal to ignite a Khoisan uprising. The *landdrost* and *heemraden* of Stellenbosch hastened to authorise and appoint local *veldkorporaals* to raise commandos in their districts but more than this was needed to deal with the escalating crisis.¹¹³ It was particularly irritating that the Khoisan attacks had been provoked by the same people who were now riding with Barbier but the government conceived of a plan to exploit this connection to their advantage. The Council of Policy decided to accept the offer of the ex-burgher councillor, Johannes Kruywagen, to lead a commando against the marauders. No doubt it was the scope, subtlety and economy of Kruywagen's proposals that made them so attractive. He proposed that those people who had been guilty of bartering cattle from the Namaqua, as well as those who were, or had been in any way involved with Estienne Barbier, should be given a free pardon on the condition that they joined his commando.¹¹⁴ By adopting Kruywagen's proposals the Company had the opportunity to appear to be punishing both the European and the Khoisan malefactors. In reality all pretence of providing justice for the Khoisan was dropped and the expedient of using the initial instigators of the unrest to crush the uprising that they themselves had provoked was an extremely cynical measure.

Kruiwagen himself was an energetic commander. On 28 April he sent instructions to the Roodezand ordering all who had been involved in bartering cattle from the Namaqua and all who had assisted Estienne Barbier to appear fully-armed at the place of Hendrik Kruger at the Piketberg. At the same time he and some others proceeded towards Groene Kloof, "confiscating cattle from the Hottentots who had lately been at the Cape, and who belonged to the Little Namaqua and Bushmen tribes" along the way.¹¹⁵ On 30 April Kruiwagen encountered Swaartbooi and Titus with some of their followers but at this stage Kruiwagen had no proof that they were responsible for the attacks further to the north. He was content to take sixty-eight of their eighty-three cattle and instructed them to return to their kraals at the Lange Vlei and behave themselves. That he did not entirely trust them is clear from the fact that he provided them with an armed escort to take them there and that he commented: "Swaartbooi and Charmant alias Titus begged me to sell or barter to them two muskets pretending that they wished to kill elephants, which request however, for reasons I refused".¹¹⁶

113. CA, C 651, 20 April 1739.

114. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 28 April 1739, pp.265-266.

115. Ibid., 2 June 1739, pp.269-270.

116. Ibid., p.270.

At Kruger's farm Kruiwagen waited until 4 May when ten men arrived who wished to receive a pardon for their past misdeeds by joining the commando. The next few days were spent in scouting and awaiting the arrival of more men. By 10 May Kruiwagen had thirty-six, at least twelve of whom were Khoikhoi, and the commando crossed the Olifants River.¹¹⁷ Shortly thereafter the commando split into two groups, the larger group of thirty going in one direction and the smaller group, including Kruiwagen, going eastwards into the Bokkeveld. Not far from the burnt and looted farm of Sybrand van Dyk in the Bokkeveld, Kruiwagen's party discovered a kraal of Khoisan.¹¹⁸ The next morning, 18 May, as the colonists cautiously approached the kraal they were spotted and heard the cry "War has been inflicted on us by the Dutch!" followed by the shouted instructions of a woman telling her man to shoot. Fighting began as Kruiwagen and his men fired into a large cave occupied by a number of Khoisan. Their fire was returned and a bullet struck Kruiwagen's musket-stock, shattering it and wounding the commander's left hand and chest. The colonists continued to fire into the cave and, according to Kruiwagen, "we must have shot and wounded a great many as we heard great groaning". Despite this some Khoisan in other caves kept up a fire of poisoned arrows on Kruiwagen's men who showed a great disinclination to obey his orders, namely, that they should advance behind a shield of live cattle into the caves. They argued that Kruiwagen might bleed to death and that it was better to retire with forty-six recaptured cattle than to bother about the remaining four hundred sheep still in the possession of the defenders. Hendrik Kruger, a member of the group, was able to identify the cattle as being those of Jochem Koekemoer. Kruiwagen ordered these to be returned to Koekemoer and, together with his men, returned to Sybrand van Dyk's farm to dress his wounds and wait for news from the other section of the commando.¹¹⁹

Even before reaching the farm, however, some riders from the larger group found Kruiwagen and told him that, three days before, Jan Gous, Jan Olivier and Gerrit van Wyk had come across a group of Khoisan in another part of the Bokkeveld who had in their possession the livestock of Tobias Mostert and Leendert Louw. In the ensuing skirmish all three colonists were wounded but the livestock was recovered. The day after this engagement the farms of Jochem Koekemoer and Hendrik Kruger had been burnt, the latter's wheat being set alight. Gous died later of his wounds.¹²⁰

117. Ibid., pp.270-273.

118. Ibid., p.273. This farm was near one of Kruiwagen's, "naar d'Ujekraal". Van Dyk's farm, described as a "post", does not show up in the loan-farm records and once again suggests the limitations of this source in providing a picture of actual land occupancy.

119. Ibid., pp.273-274.

120. Ibid., pp.274-275.

Still without the bulk of his commando Kruiwagen proceeded to Leendert Louw's farm where he found one of the slaves of Tobias Mostert who had earlier been abducted by the Khoisan. The slave had escaped and Kruiwagen interrogated him to learn what he could of the robbers. Apparently they had six muskets, plentiful supplies of lead and powder, and had vowed to kill all Europeans they encountered. At night they kept good watch and during the day they guarded the passes through which the colonists would have to travel in order to reach them. Kruiwagen did not entirely trust the slave and, thinking that he might be a spy for the Khoisan, "gave him some blows to get at the truth". His story did not, however, change.¹²¹

On 23 May Kruiwagen received information that Swaartbooi, Titus and nine other "Hottentots of the Little Namaqua" had carried off the cattle of Albert van Zyl as well as a servant and a musket. He immediately sent some of his men to Van Zyl's and on 24 May met the bulk of his commando at Hendrik Kruger's Piketberg farm. The frontier was far from pacified but there was little more that Kruiwagen could do with the forces at his disposal. It was reported that the Khoisan were threatening the livestock of the Sandveld farmers, Jacob Cloete and Jan Engelbrecht, though the former had already had all of his wheat stolen. Although 103 cattle and 530 sheep had been recovered there were still many heads of stock missing. Kruiwagen felt he had done all he could and therefore returned to the Cape to submit his report and make suggestions as to the best way in which to pursue the war. Those Khoikhoi who had participated in the commando were rewarded with one head of cattle a piece. The rest of the cattle were returned to Tobias Mostert, Jochem Koekemoer and Leendert Louw.¹²²

Kruiwagen's new proposals were simple. Another commando should be sent out as soon as possible under the leadership of good officers and should include two surgeons in the personnel. The commando should divide itself into two companies, the better to pursue its enemies, and be bolstered by the presence of two military posts which should be established on the Olifants River - one at Warne Bad and the other at Compagnies Drift. These posts, garrisoned by nine soldiers each, should be prepared to go to the assistance of the commandos when necessary and prevent the Khoisan from slipping away. The Council of Policy decided to adopt these proposals and added that not only the residents of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein should join the proposed commando but also those residents of the Cape district who had farms in the north-west.¹²³ The first attempts to implement these plans, however, failed dismally.

121. Ibid., p.275.

122. Ibid., pp.275-277.

123. Ibid., pp.277-279.

The authorities had not bargained on the less than enthusiastic support of the colonists to the call to arms. They no doubt believed that since the most rebellious of their subjects had already bowed to Company rule by fighting in Kruiwagen's commando the meeker majority would follow suit. However, the two men who had been chosen to round up men and supplies for the commando, Captain Theunis Boota and Lieutenant Johannes Louw, were obliged to report to their superiors on 23 June that they had had to return without being able to fulfil their mission. On reaching Vier en Twintig Rivieren, where they had expected to find men and supplies, they found instead that certain people from the Roodezand were completely unwilling to serve in the commando or furnish it with provisions.¹²⁴ Once more the government's authority was being challenged by the colonists of the northern frontier zone and the Company, indeed the governor himself, viewed the matter in the most serious light. He ordered the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, the officers and the two *veldkorporaals* of the Roodezand area, Jacobus Theron and Jan Coetsee, to report to him in person.¹²⁵ These individuals were then questioned very roughly by the governor and the Council of Policy. The *veldkorporaals* pleaded that the heavy rains, swollen rivers, lack of grazing and cold weather were all discouraging factors. In addition it was time for ploughing and sowing and many farmers were reluctant to go on a commando at that time. Jacobus Theron, the *veldkorporaal* for the district beyond the Roodezand's Kloof, explained that the men he had ordered out on commando had replied "that they were quite willing to obey if those who had instigated the said Hottentots would also go, without however mentioning names".¹²⁶

The government was far from pleased by this intelligence and reprimanded its appointed functionaries very severely for their lack of zeal. The governor demanded the names of anyone who refused to co-operate but there was very little alternative to postponing the proposed commando until September. In the meantime preparations were to be so thorough that Company control over the frontier would be assured. It was hard not to see the influence of Barbier behind the colonists' spirit of disobedience and it was not forgotten that the sergeant was still vagabonding in the district. The *landdrost* was instructed to bring him in: dead or alive.¹²⁷

Though Kruiwagen's commando had failed to crush Khoisan opposition it had succeeded in separating Barbier from his followers. The farmers of the frontier, sympathetic though they were to Barbier and his aims, were gradually beginning to realise that the threat which they faced from the Khoisan was greater than the threat of the Company. Even though the colonists had stirred up

124. CA, I/STB 13/4, 23 June 1739; CA, C 651, 22 June 1739.

125. CA, C 651, 29 June 1739.

126. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 7 July, 1739, pp.280-281.

127. Ibid., pp.281-282.

a hornet's nest, the Company had now demonstrated its willingness to support their claims rather than those of the Khoisan. It is possible to see this change in attitude as one of the achievements of the Barbier rebellion. Barbier's supporters had, to some extent, got what they had wanted. Their most pressing need was now to subdue the Khoisan and reach an agreement with the Company. Unfortunately for Barbier this meant the end of his dreams of an armed uprising. His followers, by joining Kruiwagen's commando, accepted government authority. Barbier had once again to substitute the pen for the sword.

Actually Barbier had never ceased to pursue his vendetta against officialdom by writing letters. Three of these were addressed to Swellengrebel and were despatched on the 6, 17, and 26 March. It would seem as though none of them reached their destination. A fourth letter, dated 22 March, took the form of a "Public circulating letter". In this all "Afrikaner brothers" were urged to disobey *Landdrost* Lourensz. Indeed, if we are to believe Van der Henghel, Barbier threatened to evict him (Van der Henghel) from the Castle with armed force having gone so far as procuring a scaling ladder for storming the walls!¹²⁸ Despite the disappointment of seeing his followers joining Kruiwagen's commando in May there was reason for some optimism in April. On the 14th of that month Swellengrebel had been appointed as governor in Van der Henghel's place. Barbier had reason to believe that the new governor would be far more sympathetic to his exposure of official corruption and redoubled his efforts at letter writing.¹²⁹

Not surprisingly, one of the targets of his displeasure was Jan Myndertz Kruiwagen. This was not simply because Barbier wished to vent his spleen against the man who had taken away his armed followers. In fact, Barbier was showing commendable consistency in attacking one of the most powerful agrarian capitalists of the northern Cape frontier zone. Though Barbier was to wonder, sarcastically, how such a comic figure as Kruiwagen ever came to volunteer or be appointed as leader of a commando, Kruiwagen had the largest vested interests in restoring peace to the frontier. He was, without doubt, one of the wealthiest and most influential men in the colony. As one of the holders of the Company meat contract he had the use of Groene Kloof as well as his many farms in the West Coast and the Bokkeveld. He also had farms in the Gouritz River area of the southern Cape. By 1743 it is estimated that Kruiwagen was farming approximately 39 000 morgen of land in the vicinity of St Helena Bay.¹³⁰ This did not make him popular with less fortunate colonists but it did give him the authority, according to Barbier, of a

¹²⁸ Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 1, p.33; Vol.2, p.21.

¹²⁹ See note 101 above.

¹³⁰ See M.H.D. Smith, *Boerepioniers Van Die Sandveld* (Pretoria, 1985), pp.58-59 for details of Kruiwagen's land holding. See also CA, RLR 8, 15 Nov. 1728, p.138; CA, RLR 9, 22 Nov. 1730, pp.74-77.

second governor. He had tremendous influence over the Company by virtue of his control over the meat supply and used this influence to determine the allocation of loan-farms as well as the price to be set on land, livestock and the freedom of *knechts*. Nothing was achieved in the area without Kruiwagen first saying "jaa, jaa" (Barbier portrayed him as a clown) and receiving payment for his approval. A man who had more farms than twenty colonists together was, in Barbier's eyes, breaking the orders of the *Heren XVII*. These gentlemen had decreed, on 30 October 1706, that no single colonists should be granted land in an amount disproportionate to his fellows. Kruiwagen was therefore an enemy of the people whose sin was compounded by making it impossible for others to sell their meat to the Company since he, Kruiwagen, could supply all its needs.¹³¹

In these respects Kruiwagen was obviously the successor of Henning Huysing and part of the eternal cabalistic elite that Frans van der Stel had identified in 1715. In attacking Kruiwagen, Barbier was clearly voicing the grumblings of poorer colonists and continuing to act as people's champion. Barbier also busied himself by collecting letters of grievance from other colonists which he planned to forward to the governor.¹³² All these actions help to explain why the loss of his armed followers did not mean the end of his freedom, for the frontier community continued to protect him. When Kruiwagen's commando returned at the end of May, Barbier's ex-comrades did not turn him in. A government *plakkaat* of 2 June promised to pardon all Company deserters who returned within three months of the announcement but Barbier either did not learn of this or did not trust it. At any rate, it is highly unlikely that the terms of clemency extended to include him, for he was not just a deserter but an outlaw as well.¹³³

In the meantime the northern frontier zone remained unstable. It was obvious that only a major military operation would restore peace but until the coming of spring it was up to the local *veldkorporaals* to ensure the safety of their districts. Barend Lubbe, the *veldkorporaal* of the Olifants River, was instructed to make sure he did not antagonise the "Hottentot Pokkebaas Claas", or any other peaceful Khoikhoi in his district, during the execution of his duties¹³⁴ - a sure sign that tensions were running high. In the Lange Vlei area the departure of Albert van Zyl and other farmers necessitated the appointment of a *veldkorporaal* for that district. The man

131. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, pp.84-88.

132. Ibid., pp.50-54.

133. Ibid., Vol. 1, p.34; Vol.2, p.24. Barbier was later to argue that he would have turned himself in had he but heard of the *plakkaat* in time, or had he dared to appear in the open when the *veldwagters* had been instructed to kill him.

134. CA, C 651, 7 June 1739; CA, I/STB 13/4, 23 June 1739.

chosen was Hendrik Kruger.¹³⁵ One of the most urgent priorities was to recover the firearms and ammunition from the marauding Khoisan for until such time, the isolated colonists could not be sure of holding their own on their farms. This was underlined by the experiences of Hendrik Beukes, a *knecht* of the *ex-heemraden* member, Jacob Cloete.

On 20 June Beukes had gone to his employer's farm near the Compagnies Drift on the Olifants River with three teams of oxen to sow wheat. Once he had done this he was supposed to take the oxen back to the Berg River, but, before he could do so, a large group of "Hottentots or Bushmen" took fourteen of the oxen, making them swim to the other side of the swollen river. It seems that Beukes was able to recover these oxen by reasoning with the Khoisan who were inclined to make peace with the Dutch provided that Kruywagen and Daniel Bokkelenberg returned the cattle they had taken from them. Two days later though the Khoisan obviously had second thoughts for they returned, took all twenty-four oxen across the river, and fired a couple of shots at Beukes for good measure. Beukes told the *landdrost* that all other farms in the vicinity had been abandoned, the nearest being three days journey south of the Olifants River.¹³⁶ Not long after this came word that the cattle of Jan Engelbrecht and Myndert van Eden had been stolen in the Sandveld.¹³⁷

In accordance with Kruywagen's suggestions a group of Company soldiers was despatched to the Olifants River on 17 July, and the date of departure for the commando fixed for 30 August.¹³⁸ To add to the excitement of the time Lourensz received a report on 18 July that Barbier had been seen in the Roodezand district and he lost no time in sending off his substitute, Countitz to capture the outlaw. The unfortunate Countitz, though accompanied by two *veldwagters*, could not have relished the job, particularly since he was the most unpopular man in the area. He reported back to Lourensz that one of the *veldwagters* had run away with his arms and provisions. The *veldwagter*, when traced, explained that he had merely been detained by going back to search for these items which had fallen unobserved from his horse. Lourensz reported to Governor Swellengrebel that he suspected that fear was the real reason for his substitute's return. As luck would have it, various complaints about Countitz reached the governor at the same time. Ironically, many of these complaints had been penned with Barbier's help. The governor's

135. CA, 1/STB 13/4, 12 June 1739.

136. CA, 1/STB 13/4, 13 July 1739; CA, C 651, 14 July 1739.

137. CA, C 455, Inkomende Briewe, 9 July-9 Dec. 1739, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 23 July 1739.

138. CA, C 651, 17 July 1739.

response was to dismiss Counitz from his post and Barbier remained free. Lourensz, meanwhile, asked for a new substitute.¹³⁹

On 31 July Barbier circulated a second public letter "Aan alles de Afrikanders gebroedsels". There was more than a hint of desperation in this letter for Barbier promised all who had had cattle stolen by the Khoisan, or who had been driven from their farms in the fighting, that he would repay them. He also assured his readers that he spoke in the name of the *Heren XVII* and the States-General of the Netherlands. It is not known whether this letter attracted much public support but at least nobody betrayed him.¹⁴⁰ On 20 August Lourensz reported to the governor that he had sent his new substitute, Witstock, to the Roodezand to investigate reports that Barbier had been seen in the homes of the widow of Joost Bevernagie and the widow of Arnoldus Basson. When Witstock went incognito to widow Basson's house he could not find him there though he learnt afterwards that Barbier had been hiding under the bed at the time. His informant was the son of the widow Burgert, at whose house Barbier had also stayed. Here he had struck the *knecht* of the widow Burgert over the head, for reasons which remain obscure. The *knecht*, Brand, said that Barbier had hit him: "because the widow Bevernagie had to pay a fine on his behalf and that the son of Burgert had sworn a false oath to this end, that he (Brand?) would wed the widow and wanted the fine again; he (Barbier) presented one of the pistols which he had to Brand and said 'See here! Shoot me dead because I have deserved death' but seeing how Barbier was holding the muzzle against his body he did not dare hazard this."¹⁴¹

Barbier was clearly beginning to despair whilst a life filled with so many widows was obviously fraught with complications! Though Witstock had been too late to discover Barbier he left instructions for the locals to hand the outlaw over to justice and set a Khoikhoi spy in place to report on his movements.¹⁴²

139. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 23 July 1739; CA, C 1101, 24 July 1739, p.14; CA, C 524, Vergaande Briewe, 24 July 1739, pp.410-411.

140. Pfeiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.31.

141. "...omdat de Wed. Bevernagie om zijnentwillen boete hadde moeten betaalen, en dat de zoon van Burgert ten dien eijnde een valschen Eed hadde gedaan, dat hy met die Wedue soude trouwen en over sulx de Boete wilden weder hebben; presenteerende voorts aan gem. Brand een van de bijhebbende pistoolen, onder het seggen "Sie daar! Schiet my dood, want ik hebbe dog de doot verdient" dog denselven heeft sulx aangesien hem Barbier de tromp naar het lyf heild niet durven hazardeeren". CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 20 Aug. 1739.

142. Ibid.

PACIFICATION

By 8 August Captain Theunis Boota was on the march at the head of a force of eighty-three men, both European and Khoikhoi.¹⁴³ The spring campaign was proceeding ahead of schedule and in front of the main commando the *veldkorporaals*, Andries Burgers and Barend Lubbe, had been busy. In response to the burning of Jurgen Hanekom's farm in the Lange Vlei, Burgers and ten men had attacked a group of Khoisan, killing twenty of them and capturing a musket. One of Burgers' men was killed by a poisoned arrow and it is of interest to note that it was "den vryswart Pieter Sijmons".¹⁴⁴ At the Olifants River Barend Lubbe and his men attacked the kraal of Captain Jaager, killing sixteen of his people and recovering thirty-two of Van Eden's cattle, fifty-five of Jan Engelbrecht's and one musket. One of Lubbe's men was shot by a poisoned arrow and died two days later. The Company sergeant, Wassner, part of the garrison at the Olifants River, was proud to announce that he had totally ruined Jaager's kraal and taken a further 109 cattle and 30 sheep.¹⁴⁵

As Boota's commando moved slowly northwards the troublesome Khoisan of the Lange Vlei struck again, ambushing two wheat laden wagons of Jan Engelbrecht. Engelbrecht had planned on sowing wheat at his Lange Vlei farm and had gone with three companions to Adriaan Louw's to fetch some. On their return they were ambushed and Engelbrecht and Philip Meyer were shot dead. The other two colonists, Martinus van Staden and Willem Grobbelaar, escaped but the two wagons, the wheat, 200 cattle and 350 sheep were stolen.¹⁴⁶ The neutral Khoikhoi captain, "Pokkebaas Claas" suddenly slipped away to join the "Hottentot Wessels" - a move regarded with great suspicion by Barend Lubbe, and in another incident which illustrates the heightened tension of the time a Khoikhoi called Barend, who lived at Albert Bergh's farm at the Piketberg, claimed that a certain Jan Karstens had killed two Khoikhoi, Wittebooij and Ouderkrooij, without any reason.¹⁴⁷

143. CA, 1/STB 13/4, 15 Aug. 1739; CA, C 651, 15 Aug. 1739. Theunis Boota (or Botha) probably knew the country well for in 1717 he and his brother Jacobus had been given permission to go hunting beyond the Olifants River. CA, RLR 3, 11 Aug. 1717, p.282.

144. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 12 Aug. 1739.

145. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 20 Aug. 1739.

146. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 5 Sept. 1739; De Wet (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 31 Oct. 1739, pp.301-302.

147. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 20 Aug. 1739; De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 31 Oct. 1739, p.302.

Even at this stage there were still many members of Boota's commando who were doing their duty with reluctance. Boota reported that on 8 September the majority of the men appeared before his tent:

en hebben aan ons versogt te moogen weeten wat voor ordres wij hadden, terwijl, soo se voorgaaven, hadden gehoord van eenige personen dat 't vee hetwelke door onse commando van de Hottentots soude genoomen werden, aan die personen welke door den subsyituut land-drost het vee was afgenoomen, tot voldoening soude gegeven worden, seggende siylieden voorts gewillig te zijn te gehoosaamen de beveelens van hunne Heeren en Meester met veel eerbiedigheid, en alles wat hun soude gecommandeert worden maar dat zij, indien zulx soude geschieden, eerder al de beesten wilden dootschieten, aangesien die menschen selfs oorsaak van al het quaad waaren, en dat zij voor hun aandeel geen hair pretendeeren.¹⁴⁸

Boota answered that it was up to the governor to decide on what to do with the cattle and that if they had any complaints they were to address them to him. The men seemed to accept this reply and the commando continued operations.

Proceeding northwards towards the Doorn River and sending scouts on ahead the commando found one of the stolen wagons, abandoned because of a broken pole. Near "Uyen Kraal" the spoor of the "Hottentot Vuilbaard" was discovered and it was thought that his kraal must be near the farm of Jochem Koekemoer. A strong detachment of men was sent to locate it and, after doing so, attacked it on 17 September. Five Khoisan were killed, a musket recovered and some women and children taken prisoner. These survivors told their captors of another armed kraal in the vicinity and after marching all of the next day (18 September) through the mountains the kraal was spotted by scouts. At dawn next day the commando attacked from two sides, killing twenty-nine Khoisan and capturing six. Eighty-two cattle and eighty-two sheep were taken.¹⁴⁹

There were, however, still other Khoisan groups in the mountains of the northern Bokkeveld that were deemed to be a threat. On 25 September it was the turn of Captain Jantje Klipheuwel's kraal to suffer a surprise attack at dawn. This time thirteen Khoisan were killed and a number wounded. One of the colonial Khoikhoi was killed and Hendrik Debes, a cavalry captain, was wounded in the head. Five muskets, three iron pots, a copper kettle, three horses and a saddle

148. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 31 Oct. 1739, pp.302-303. "...and wished to know what orders we had, as they had been told that the cattle which the commando might capture would be given as a satisfaction to those persons from whom the substitute Landdrost had taken the cattle: they added that they were willing to obey the orders of their Lords and Masters with every reverence, in everything ordered of them, but if that were the case they would rather kill all the cattle, as these persons were themselves the cause of the evil; and that as their share they would not claim a hair".

149. Ibid., pp.303-304.

were found at the kraal: proof that - however these items came to be there - colonial commodities had reached the outlying Khoisan before the commandos. Klipheuwel's kraal also had 162 cattle and 209 sheep. Before leaving the kraal the commando returned forty-eight cattle and forty sheep to the survivors and "made peace" with them. The place was named "Oorlogskloof" - a name it retains to this day.¹⁵⁰

Still the commando continued to scour the northern Bokkeveld for any further kraals. On the far side of the Doorn River one was found and attacked on 4 October. Seventeen Khoisan were killed, twenty-two wounded and the survivors granted peace though they lost a musket, 101 cattle and 120 sheep. On the colonial side a certain Hendrik Treuniet was wounded, whilst one horse was killed and another wounded. One further kraal was discovered near the Doorn River and though it was abandoned the colonists rounded up forty-eight cattle and seventy-nine sheep which had been left behind. There was, however, one Khoisan man who had not left and "who would not surrender, so that it was necessary to kill him after he had wounded one of the men with an arrow and stabbed to death five oxen with an assegai".¹⁵¹

It might be asked whether many innocent lives were not lost by these ruthless search and destroy tactics. Possession of a musket, or indeed livestock, need not have been proof of having waged war against the colonists. But although the justice of such actions is debatable the effect was to put an end to the possibility of independent Khoisan existence in the Bokkeveld. It was now clear to the scattered remnants of the area's Khoisan groups that they were vulnerable to commando attacks and, with this realisation, went the knowledge that they could not prevent the entry of colonial *trekboers* into the Onder Bokkeveld or, beyond that, the Hantam and the Roggeveld. The Onder Bokkeveld could also be used as a stepping stone to Namaqualand and this was indeed the next move contemplated by Boota's commando. It was thought that if there were any further Khoisan or cattle to be found then they would most likely be in Namaqualand. On 11 October, therefore, Boota assembled his men and ordered them to go to Namaqualand but they were most unwilling. They explained that it would mean a four day journey without water. After more than two months on commando there cannot have been many who were anxious to face further hardships and the decision was made to return home.¹⁵²

Boota arrived back at Stellenbosch on 27 September and the captured cattle were redistributed: some to the original owners, some to the Khoikhoi commando members and the rest to the

150. Ibid., p.304.

151. Ibid., pp.305-306.

152. Ibid., pp.306-307.

Company cattle post at Groene Kloof to join the herd that Counitz had confiscated. The governor and *landdrost* declared themselves well pleased with events and considered that it was now safe enough to recall the Company soldiers from the Olifants River.¹⁵³ The Bokkeveld, Doorn and Olifants Rivers had now been cleared of all real or potential Khoisan resisters but what was the situation in the Sandveld?

According to Boota the "slimste oproermaakers", Swaartbooij and Titus, had fled to the Little Namaquas.¹⁵⁴ But whilst Boota had been leading his commando in the Bokkeveld another commando had been campaigning up the west coast and it was here that the fate of the Lange Vlei Khoisan was decided. Shortly before the departure of Boota's commando the Council of Policy had received reports that a ship had been wrecked on the Namaqualand coast and that there were some survivors. These reports had come from some of the colonists who, in turn, had the information from the Khoikhoi. Vague though this information was the Council decided to send an expedition of thirty to thirty-six men up the west coast to investigate. It did not like the idea that the Khoisan of those parts, with whom it was at war, might have acquired arms or lead from a wreck. The expedition would entail no extra expense since one of its objectives would be "the usual cattle barter with the Hottentots in the neighbourhood". Thus it was that Jan Gibbelaas, foreman of the Company Schuur, was entrusted with the expedition.¹⁵⁵

By 2 October Gibbelaas and his men had reached Meerhof's Casteel, about three days journey south of the Little Namaqua. Here they found a number of cattle and a group of Khoisan who took to their heels as soon as they saw the colonists. Finding this behaviour suspicious, and noting that some of the Khoisan had guns, Gibbelaas proceeded cautiously. He was able to persuade some of the Khoisan to approach him when he went towards them with a mere three men for company. There was a great deal of mutual suspicion which was increased when Gibbelaas recognised the notorious Swaartbooij, wearing a powder horn, and his son Titus, alias Charmant. Talking smoothly, Gibbelaas asked them why they had run away since they were Company men and would not harm them. Swaartbooij and his son replied that they had recognised the voice of Willem van Wyk and had thought the men to be "booren".¹⁵⁶ The Khoisan were correct; Willem van Wyk was with the commando. They were incorrect, however, to assume that the Company was less dangerous than the "booren" - though their use of the latter

153. Ibid., pp.307-308; CA, I/STB 13/4, 28 Oct. 1739; CA, C 651, 28 Oct. 1739.

154. CA, C 651, 28 Oct. 1739.

155. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 4 Aug. 1739, pp.285-286.

156. Ibid., 8 Dec. 1739, pp.319-320.

term is a fascinating indication that, at least in the eyes of the Khoisan, the frontier farmers had achieved a separate identity.

As the discussion took place Gibbelaas dispensed some tobacco and arrack whilst Van Wyk and the Khoikhoi Keyser joined the group. These two quietly informed Gibbelaas that they had overheard some of the Khoisan (some of whom were Little Namaqua) plotting to go to the Lange Vlei or the Piketberg to rob the farmers. Van Wyk was, of course, an extremely biased source of information but Gibbelaas did not need an excuse for getting his retaliation in first. Noticing the nearby Khoisan edging away and:

heb ik uijt vrees dat wanneer ik vandaar vertrocken soude zyn, sijl. herwaarts koomende haar boos voorneemen soudent ter uitvoer brengen, te meer dewijl zij van de geene waaren die hier ten platten lande soo veel roverijen en moorden gepleegt hebben, en dat zij behalven een snaphaan nog met boog en assegaaij gewaapent waaren; tot stuijting van dit hun quaad voorneemen onder deselve soo als se de vlugt begaanen te neemen, doen schieten, bij welke actie tusschen de 30 en 40 van deselve zijn dood gebleeven, waaronder sig dn voorm. capn Swarte Booij bevond, zijnde desselfs soon Titus het ontkoomen, alhoewel denselven bij die gellegentijd is gequeste geworden, gelijke ik zulx aan desselfs caros, door hem in de loop agter gelaaten, hebbe kunnen verneemen.¹⁵⁷

Only three powder horns, some bullets and seven oxen were recovered. Those Khoisan who had the muskets had escaped since, trying to keep these from the sight of the commando, they had been furthest away.

O.F. Mentzel, who was a soldier at the Cape at this time, wrote an account of the massacre some forty-eight years later. Although his account seeks to portray the commando as acting out of justifiable fear as "thousands" of "insolent" and "truculent" "Bushmen swarmed from all sides" he does add one detail that is chillingly convincing:

Since the position had become serious, the Commander ordered grape shot to be fired from the field-cannon he had with him, and his men to fire their muskets in volleys of ten, thereby killing and wounding a considerable number of men and women. The war ended suddenly. The enemy fled, some of the women even abandoning their children in fright. Though this was a very weak Commando, some of the soldiers proved that if they were free to do as they pleased, they could be wanton and savage. Some of the most brutal ones seized the small children by their

157. Ibid., p.320. "fearing that after my departure they would come hitherward in order to carry out their evil intention, and the more so as they were of those who had committed so many thefts and murders, and moreover seeing that they were armed with muskets, bow and assegaai, and in order to frustrate their evil purpose, ordered my men to fire at them as soon as they ran away, when between thirty or forty were killed, among them the Captain Swartbooij whose son Titus however escaped though wounded as I discovered from his kaross thrown away in his flight".

legs and crushed their heads against the stones. Others killed the wounded women and cut off their long breasts, afterwards making themselves tobacco pouches from these as tokens of their heroism.¹⁵⁸

After this massacre Gibbelaas' commando continued northwards along the coast until it reached the Buffels River.¹⁵⁹ Here they encountered three Grigriqua and two "beach bushmen" ("Strand Bosjesmans"). These individuals knew nothing about a wreck and maintained that the whole story had been fabricated by Swaartbooij to provide him with a pretext for attacking a kraal of "beach bushmen", killing some of them and taking their cattle. Swaartbooij had then told the Little Namaqua that he had attacked the "beach bushmen" because they had murdered the crew of a wrecked ship. Gibbelaas checked this story by travelling a further thirty leagues northwards along the coast without finding any evidence of a wreck; nor could the "beach bushmen" or Grigriqua whom he employed to search the coast find anything.¹⁶⁰

On the way back to the Cape the commando went inland so as to make contact with the Little Namaqua and barter for cattle. So anxious were the Namaqua for peace, and so determined were they to disassociate themselves from the violent robberies of the past year, that they allowed themselves to part with 111 cattle. The arrival of some thirty or forty well armed and bloodthirsty men in their midst no doubt had a lot to do with their generosity. So too did the compromising presence of 118 cattle amongst their herds which were identified as having belonged to Albert and Pieter van Zyl. These cattle had been stolen by Swaartbooij and Titus in May and it is not clear how they ended up in the possession of the Little Namaqua. These cattle were returned to the colonists and the Namaqua made promises of obedience to and co-operation with the Company in the future. The commando then left for the Cape which it reached on 28 November.¹⁶¹

From the Piketberg to Namaqualand, from the west coast to the Bokkeveld, the Khoisan had been shattered, dispersed and subjugated. The Company could also rejoice in the fact that Estienne Barbier had ceased to be a menace for on 9 September the elusive outlaw had finally been

158. H.J. Mandelbrote, (ed.), *A Geographical And Topographical Description Of The Cape Of Good Hope By O.F. Mentzel*, Part Three (Cape Town, reprint 1944), pp.309-319. When commenting on this passage Mandelbrote had not found Gibbelaas' journal which is in the Council of Policy records.

159. In the original the river is called the "Cous" or "Cung" river. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 8 Dec. 1739, pp.320-321. This is a form of the Namaqua name. See Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentottica*, B, (Pretoria, 1980), pp.779-780.

160. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 8 Dec. 1739, pp.320-321.

161. Ibid., pp.321-322.

captured in the Roodezand.¹⁶² According to Barbier he had been on his way to the Cape, on the wagon of Steven Fouché, to give himself up. According to Mentzel, however, he had been betrayed. Barbier was set upon a horse, with his feet tied beneath its belly, and reached Cape Town, via Stellenbosch, on 11 September. The governor ordered him placed in the "Donker Gat". Mentzel describes that:

Up till this time Barbier had been of good courage. He had laughed and jested over his captivity and had given it clearly to be understood that he had a letter of safe-conduct, on the production of which he would speedily be released from arrest, while Herr Allemann would be punished in his stead. He was taken off the horse by the Patrol guard and went into the Castle on foot; when he had passed through the gate and come to the sergeant's guard-house he made as if to enter it, imagining that it would be his right as a sergeant to spend there his period of detention. He was ordered, however, to go on and was taken to the Donckle Gatt; when he realised that it in very truth was his destination he suddenly lost all his courage, became very cast down and began to weep.¹⁶³

This time Barbier was kept in the "Donker Gat" for nine weeks. It was six weeks before he was even charged with anything for, as Mentzel explains, this was the custom, producing an excellent effect on the prisoner who would then confess everything in order to obtain a speedy death.¹⁶⁴ On 22 October Barbier's case began. The various documents which he had addressed to both the populace and the government were circulated for the consideration of the Council of Policy. Barbier had already been interrogated on 2 October by his old enemy, Van der Henghel, who was once again filling the office of fiscal. A confession was hardly necessary. The Council had quite enough evidence to condemn Barbier and he did not deny any of the actions he had committed or retract any of the words he had said. All he could do was ask that his case be heard in Holland and that the Council show him mercy.¹⁶⁵

The answer came on 12 November when sentence was passed. Barbier was found guilty of seven grave charges, most of which, since they were aimed at upsetting the political and civil order, were considered to be worthy of punishment by death. The encitement of armed rebellion amongst the people against their "lawful authorities" was the key issue. Barbier had encouraged others to challenge the State's authority in the name of the States-General. In the eyes of his judges, his crimes were enormous.¹⁶⁶

162. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, p.24.

163. Mentzel, *Allemann*, pp.115-116.

164. Ibid.

165. Pheiffer, "Gebroke Nederlands", Vol. 2, pp.12-24.

166. Theal, *Dokumenten*, pp.6-12.

He was sentenced to be bound on a cross and to have his right hand, then his head, chopped off. His body was to be quartered. His head and hand were to be raised on a stake and placed at the Roodezand's Kloof. The four quarters of his body were to be hung in four different places next to the busiest roads of the colony. In choosing to implement this atrocious execution the state was simply being true to its nature. As Foucault has explained: "The public execution is to be understood not only as a judicial, but also as a political ritual. It belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested".¹⁶⁷

The sentence was carried out on 14 November 1739. It was a Saturday and the crowd around the scaffold was so dense that Mentzel, who was present, could not get close enough to hear De Grandpreez reading the sentence. The words "lands verrader" occurred frequently in the indictment. After a short prayer Barbier was stripped, bound, and put to death in the prescribed manner. His entrails were buried under the scaffold and the parts of his body distributed for public display along the high roads. "Such was the melancholy end of a turbulent fellow," reported Mentzel.¹⁶⁸

But there was some indication that Barbier was still held in esteem by the colonists of the northern frontier. The *knecht* of the pontoon holder at the Berg River reported to *Landdrost* Lourensz that somebody at the crossing had burnt down the pole on which one of Barbier's quarters was affixed. The *landdrost*, who had previously requested a gallows for Stellenbosch so that he could suspend slave suicides upside down, went personally to re-erect the pole.¹⁶⁹ The State was determined to impose the "spectacle of the scaffold" in the countryside as well as in the town.¹⁷⁰ It would also seem as though Barbier's supporter, Arnoldus Basson, refused to submit to the Company for on 18 August 1740 he was found guilty of disobedience by the Council of Justice and banished to the Netherlands.¹⁷¹

The government could now afford to examine certain aspects of the recent events and take measures to ensure that there would be no recurrence of unrest. One of its first actions was to

167. M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p.47. He adds: "In the excesses of torture a whole economy of power is invested" (p.35).

168. Mentzel, *Allemann*, pp.116-117.

169. CA, C 455, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 3 Dec. 1739 and 8 Dec. 1739. There are several letters from Lourensz to the governor in which he describes the vigour with which he drags the corpses of slaves who committed suicide to deposit them in porcupine holes. CA, LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, Lourensz to Governor, 12 Feb. 1729.

170. The phrase is Foucault's. I think Hobsbawm is wrong to say that the ritual of public execution belongs to the myth of urban crime rather than to social banditry. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p.128.

171. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 21 March 1739, p.260, n.105. Basson attempted to return to the Cape as an anonymous sailor but died on the voyage home.

issue a new and very severe proclamation against bartering cattle from the "Hottentots and Caffers". Especially detestable were those who:

with violence deprive those poor people, who ever against Europeans are defenceless beings of their property, by which great loss and injury are brought upon the country, and likewise the judgement of God, as can be clearly seen in the failure of the crops so many years successively, and in other vexations.¹⁷²

Such pious and humane sentiments seem surprising coming from the same body which had approved of Kruiwagen's suggestions, deprived Captain Gaam and others of their cattle and authorised the commandos responsible for having killed at least a hundred Khoisan. The proclamation went on to threaten even capital punishment for future offenders, if the circumstances of the case warranted it, but there can have been few who took this threat at its face value.

The cattle which had been captured by the commandos, as well as those which had been confiscated by Counitz, now had to be re-allocated. Counitz's behaviour, which had been the subject of a thorough investigation, was found to be almost blameless, at least insofar as the complaints of those from whom he had confiscated cattle were concerned. No cattle were returned to these people. Instead all the cattle collected by Counitz, Kruiwagen and the commandos were sold and the proceeds used to pay for the costs of the commandos.¹⁷³ The Company was still irked by the disobedience of those burghers of the Roodezand who had at first refused to go on a commando, and who had hinted that such duty was the responsibility of the initiators of the unrest, but it was decided to overlook their "malicious foolishness" on this occasion since they had subsequently participated in the commandos.¹⁷⁴

All that was now required was a final reckoning with Titus for in December 1739 Daniel Bokkelenberg of the Lange Vlei reported that he had been seen in the area and was engaged in trying to get the local "bushmen" to join him on an attack on the Europeans.¹⁷⁵ The *landdrost* immediately sent instructions to *Veldkorporaal* Andries Burgers to raise a commando and to go to Bokkelenberg's farm. Before anything further could be done, however, Bokkelenberg sent another report, claiming that a Khoikhoi of his vicinity had come to warn him that Titus, together with some of the "Bokkeveld Hottentots", namely the kraals of Ruyter, Caffer and Boebesak,

172. Ibid., 8 Dec. 1739, pp.322-323.

173. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, 19 Jan. 1740, pp.2-5.

174. Ibid., p.4.

175. CA, C 651, 22 Dec. 1739.

were planning on attacking the local farmers. Once more Andries Burgers was urged on his way.¹⁷⁶

His journey was unnecessary. Even before he arrived at the Lange Vlei the *landdrost* had news from Bokkelenberg that Titus alias Charmant had breathed his last. What had happened was that Titus had suddenly appeared before one of Bokkelenberg's shepherds and held an assegai to his chest, asking him if he would join him in an uprising. The shepherd, not surprisingly, said that he would and was then instructed to meet Titus the next day at the Lange Vlei with Titus' brother in his company. Titus then boasted, as he ate one of Bokkelenberg's sheep, that he would return the next day with one hundred of his soldiers and, once re-united with his brother, destroy Bokkelenberg's farm, steal his cattle and slaughter his sheep. The shepherd went and told Bokkelenberg all he had learnt and that night his master and Pieter du Bruyn proceeded to the designated rendezvous at the Lange Vlei. To complete the ambush they had Titus' brother, presumably a servant of Bokkelenberg, drive the sheep there the next morning so that Titus and a single companion had no hesitation in approaching boldly. Bokkelenberg and De Bruyn then sprang out and when Titus tried to run away De Bruyn shot his arm off. Incredibly the chase lasted another half an hour before the weakening Titus was caught. Shortly thereafter he died.¹⁷⁷

On receiving this news *Landdrost* Lourensz expressed the hope that all the tumult and uproar caused by the "Hottentots-Bosjesmans" would now cease and that the good settlers would once more return to their farms in the Piketberg and Olifants River districts.¹⁷⁸ The war had been very expensive for many of the frontier farmers and the government was concerned that the poverty of several was preventing them from paying their loan-farm rentals.¹⁷⁹ Some, like Pieter van Zyl and Jacob Cloete, had not been able to use their farms for fourteen months.¹⁸⁰ There was, of course, concern that the resentments which had fuelled the Barbier rebellion might resurface again but, to an extent, the seriousness of the frontier war of 1739 contributed to the Company's success in containing rural revolt. By waging war against the Khoisan the Company appeared to be taking the side of the settlers. With their farms in flames and their cattle in the hands of Khoisan attackers the majority of the frontier farmers had no time to join an anti-government revolt. But there were other reasons for the limitations of the Barbier rebellion and these have to do with the fact that it was, essentially, a movement of social banditry.

176. CA, 1/STB 13/5, 5 Jan. 1740; CA, C 652, 5 Jan. 1740.

177. CA, C 456, Inkomende Briewe 3 Jan. 1740-31 March 1740, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 20 Jan. 1740.

178. CA, 1/STB 13/5, 2 Feb. 1740.

179. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, 19 Jan. 1740, p.5.

180. Scholtz, "Onder-Olifantsrivier", p.40.

In the first place it may be seen that the Barbier rebellion meets Hobsbawm's requirements for social banditry in the figure of Barbier himself. The lone wolf on the margins of society; the fugitive from the State who is protected by the people; the friend of widows and the poor; the champion of the oppressed and defier of the oppressor - all these are characteristics of the social bandit. In the second place Barbier's rebellion conforms to Hobsbawm's idea of social banditry as a primitive form of social protest. It was, demonstrably, "a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them". Barbier went to some pains to demonstrate that the world he desired was one in which the traditional laws of the ultimate authorities (in this case the VOC and the States-General of the Netherlands) were respected. The rebellion was also, clearly, a reaction against the world of capitalism; in this case the powerful agrarian capitalism of the Cape gentry and their corrupt friends amongst the Company officials. Though the poor farmers who joined or protected Barbier were not "traditional or pre-capitalist peasants" they did not have to be. As O'Malley has explained the "unified conflict consciousness" which they displayed in a terrain permeated by chronic class struggle is a more useful concept to employ than that of the "traditional peasantry".

Barbier's rebellion also satisfies Austen's stipulations about pre-conditions for social banditry. The State was very much present in both the town and countryside of the western Cape in the 1730s. It was determined to structure the social, political and economic life of the colonists to the best of its ability for its hegemony was not to be flouted. It declared Barbier an outlaw and pursued him to the end. Significantly Barbier did not choose to slip beyond the colonial frontier altogether - like other deserters or escaped slaves¹⁸¹ - but stayed within the fringes of colonial society. It was no easy matter to abandon the protection of sympathetic supporters and exchange it for the arid inhospitality of the African interior. There was, in any case, a major war being fought between the Khoisan and the colonists along the northern frontier. (Besides, Barbier was not so much interested in running away as he was in revenge). Though the African colonial frontier and the "primary resistance" of the Khoisan provide much of the background to the rebellion, they were not the same thing. Even though there was a strong connection between Barbier's followers and the origins of the frontier war of 1739 it is quite obvious that the Barbier rebellion was not a case of "primary resistance". It arose within colonial society and was conducted within colonial society.

Ironically it was the government's very success in crushing Khoisan resistance in the war of 1739 which was to weaken its hold over the colonists in the long term. White stock-farmers were now

181. See following chapter.

in complete control of all suitable pastoral land south of Namaqualand and west of the Bokkeveld. Over a hundred Khoisan had been killed¹⁸² (compared with a handful of colonists) and great quantities of Khoikhoi livestock, not all of it recovered booty, had been taken from the survivors. Those Khoisan who remained in or around the Bokkeveld, Piketberg, Sandveld, Olifants and Doorn River areas were now a cowed and broken people living in isolated kraals. Their only hope of survival lay in their acceptance of Dutch overlordship (symbolised by the staff of office given to the kraal captains by the VOC) and their promise to keep the peace. Thus it was that on 8 September 1740 Hendrik Kruger arrived at Stellenbosch with a representative of those "bushmen" who had survived the commandos and who now wished to make peace and receive a staff of office.¹⁸³ Kruger was instructed to escort the deputation to the Cape and on 10 September copper-headed canes were given to Captains Waterboer, Anthonie Dragonder and Klein Jantje.¹⁸⁴

The defeat of the Khoisan now emboldened the colonists to expand into the interior and satisfy their hunger for land, Khoikhoi labour and livestock. Avoiding the arid Knechtsvlakte to the north the *trekboers* moved in a north-easterly direction, into the Onder Bokkeveld, the Hantam and the Roggeveld. The consequences of this move were to be felt not only by the Khoisan of the Cape interior but also by the colonial authorities. From this date onwards there was to be a decrease in state control in the frontier zone and 1739 was perhaps the last occasion when the Company was able to bring a decisive influence to bear on both the Khoisan and the colonists. It has been well argued that the life of the *trekboers* was, in any event, a form of institutionalised rebellion¹⁸⁵ and, from 1740 onwards, the distance of the frontier zone from Cape Town made it impossible for the Company to rule all of its subjects. In future commandos would be composed exclusively of frontiersmen and their servants, making it almost impossible for the Company to exercise more than a purely nominal control over them.

This was particularly significant for the commando was to become the most important political institution of the frontier zone and the realities of power were reflected in the growing unwillingness and inability of the Company to regulate relations between the Khoisan and the colonists. Before 1739 the government at the Cape had attempted, albeit ineffectively, to protect the Khoisan from the excesses of the colonists. After the Barbier rebellion and the war of 1739,

182. It is fairly certain, if the Gibbelaas commando is representative, that atrocities and killings were under-reported. Reported Khoisan casualties between 1738 and 1739 were, however, over a hundred.

183. CA, C 457, Letters Received, Lourensz to Swellengrebel, 9 Sept. 1740.

184. CA, C 616, Dagregister 1739-1743, 10 Sept. 1740, pp.410-412.

185. R. Austen, *African Economic History* (London, 1987), p.161.

however, the *trekboers* had little cause to complain that the authorities were not supporting their interests. The influence of the state, where it was felt at all on the frontier, was henceforth to be placed behind the commandos in their attempts to overcome Khoisan resistance.

Fugitives and the Frontier Zone, c.1700-1770

DROSTERS AND DROSTER GANGS

Not all pioneers of the colonial frontier were stock-farmers, licensed-hunters or official explorers. Some, indeed the foremost, were fugitives, whose greatest desire was to remove themselves from the strictures of the VOC's laws. These runaway slaves, deserted sailors, absconding soldiers, "landloopers", vagabonds, debtors, escaped murderers, bandits, counterfeiters, thieves and assorted criminals were, in a sense, the cutting edge of colonial expansion. Of necessity they had to remain one step ahead of the colony, beyond the vanguard of the frontier farmers. In their lawless diversity these refugees and rogues constituted the outer margins of the frontier zone, the uncontrollable excrescence of the colony and, as such, their influence on the Khoisan societies of the interior was considerable.

Individual fugitives would often form themselves into groups, bound together in a particular form of resistance to oppression - flight. These groups of *drosters* (from the Dutch word *drossen*: "to run away" or "to desert") were an integral aspect of the frontier zone and the changing nature of their composition and character is an important indicator of the transforming processes of colonial expansion.¹ Although the immediate impact of these groups on the societies of the Cape interior was essentially destructive, in the long run they played a more positive role. From the wreckage of traditional societies arose hybrid groups, the Oorlams or "Bastaards" of later fame. Very often, at the nucleus of such a group, would be some *drosters* or their descendants. It is thus essential to devote some attention to these most important catalysts of change.

The most common type of fugitive was the runaway slave.² In 1686 the Council of Policy was alarmed by the "daily and continuous" flight of Company and private slaves who, armed with guns, sustained themselves in groups in the wilderness. It was resolved to punish recaptives with a beating with rods, the amputation of an ear and the attachment of chains to their persons. These measures were to be enforced until an improvement in circumstances was noted.³ By October 1702 however, runaways were still so prevalent that the Company post-holders along the colony's

1. For a further discussion of these issues, particularly after 1770, see N. Penn, "Droster Gangs of the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld, 1770-1800" in *South African Historical Journal*, 23, (1990), pp.15-40.

2. Studies which deal with fugitive slaves and their relationship with other societies at the Cape are R. Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (London, 1983) and N. Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge, 1985).

3. A.J. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 1681-1707, 20 July, 1686, p.140.

frontier were instructed to send out a man every day to look for fugitive slaves and shoot them if necessary.⁴ The situation had obviously not improved by June 1711 for on this date the punishment for recaptives was upgraded so as to cause more terror amongst the slaves and to act as a deterrent. A first offender would now not only be whipped but branded on the cheek. For a second escape attempt the punishment would include branding on the other cheek and, if a man was unlucky enough to be caught for a third time, he could expect to have his ears and nose cut off.⁵ These punishments were, however, contingent on the captive not having committed any death deserving crimes (such as theft) during his flight. If he had done so he could expect no mercy.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to explain why a slave should wish to run away from a regime where such punishments were permissible. But what objectives, apart from flight, did the fugitive slave have? The mountains of the Cape interior had always beckoned enticingly to fugitives, offering a wild and elusive place of refuge seemingly removed from colonial control. There were doubtless many who imagined that they would be able to live a life of independence beyond the boundaries of the colony, trusting to their own strength and resourcefulness to survive in the wilderness. Others harboured unrealistic ambitions of returning to their countries of origin or distant lands reported to be safe havens. Several runaways, for instance, were recaptured after trying to reach Angola, Madagascar or Natal, their ignorance of geography acting as a stimulus rather than as a deterrent. Whatever their plans, however, fugitives were bound to encounter indigenous groups at some stage in their flight and their influence was invariably disruptive.

For the most part these *drosters* were desperate, armed and ravenous, thus posing a direct threat to the lives and livestock of the Khoikhoi. It was, in fact, extremely difficult for inexperienced and ill equipped new-comers to survive in the Cape mountains, making it almost inevitable that the Khoikhoi would be approached. Some of the *drosters* may have had no other wish than to be accepted as new members of a protective Khoikhoi group though they were not always assured of a friendly welcome. The Company, in any event, worked hard to ensure that the neighbouring Khoikhoi would return colonial property. Groups such as the Chariguriqua, for instance, who had won the reputation of welcoming runaway slaves, were made to suffer the consequences of their misplaced generosity. The mixture of bribery and threats which was employed is well illustrated in the Council of Policy's instructions of 1696:

4. CA, LM 10, Council of Policy, *Precis of Letters Despatched*, 1699-1708, 10 Oct. 1702, pp.763-764.

5. A.J. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 4, 1707-1715, 1 June, 1711, p.227.

de Grigriquase Hottentots geleegeen aan geenzijde de Elephants-rivier, een Natie die met de E.Compagnie eggen de minste correspondentie noch vrundschap gewoon is te houden, onder haer voor een gewoon te hebben alle wegh gelooopen lijffe <ij> genen deser vrije ingesetenen die tot haer overcomen aan te houden en in haar dienst emploijeren, sonder dat men oijt geweeten heeft op wat plaatse dese gefugeerdens haer onthielden: Een maniere van doen regel reght strijdich de prijsseelike gewoonte van andere Hottentotsse-natien, de welcken als sijnde van een civielder humeur ende aan de E.Compe. getrouw, gewoon sijn, wanneer sij een wegh gelooopen slaeff hebben achterhaelt, deselve op te brengen, en waer door deselve hare rechte lijffheeren weder gewerden: En dat het verder ook sijn bedencken inhad off niet wel dese gedeserteerde jongens off morgen in getal aannemende, 't zij in 't samenspannen met dese Grigriquase Hottentots, offte haer van dese laaste hebbende meester gemaect, souden ondernemen sommigen onser vrije ingesetenen die wijt en zeijt van een woonen, bij ontijden als anders 't overrompelen en te ruineren: om welke gedreighde onhejlen dan die in tyd ende wijlen daer uijt souden mogen comen t' ontstaan, voor te comen, mitsgs. ook tot restitutie van dese geaufugeerdens te geraaken, Soo is 't dat bij sijn Ede. en desen E.A.Politijcquen Raade 't gene voors. wel ingesien ende overvogen sijnde, eenpaarlijk hebben geresolveert ende beslooten den genoemde vaandrager, tot versterckinh van sijn bijhebbende manschap, een sergt. met noch thien Comps. dienaren en twintich vrijborgers van Stellenbosch toe te senden omme, te saamen alsoo geconjungeert sijnde, over de geseijde Elephants-rivier nae de voors. Grigriquase Hottentots te marcheeren, en sonder de minste bloedstorting, op de accommodabelste ende saghste wijze en maniere, onder schijn van ruijlingh off handel, de geseijde weghgelooopen slaven die bij haar noch gevonden mochten werden, te bemachtigen met ordre nochtans (omme in cas van onwillicheijt off weijgeringe) een van de geseijde Grigriquase capiteijns offte sommige haarder vrouwen off kinderen als ostagijs nae desen Castele sien op te brengen, omme alhier soo lange te verblijven tot dat de meergeseijde Grigriquase Hottentots de voors. aangehouden slaven aen de E.Comp. weder sullen hebben gerestitueert...⁶

6. "The Grigriquase Hottentots lying on the other side of the Olifants River, a nation with whom the Hon. Company is not used to having the least correspondence or friendship, are accustomed to have runaway slaves of the free inhabitants amongst them who have come to them and whom they employ in their service, without anyone knowing where these fugitives hide themselves: a course of action completely contrary to the praiseworthy behaviour of other Hottentot nations, who are of a more civil disposition and loyal to the Company, and who are accustomed, whenever they apprehend a runaway slave, to deliver him up, so that he is returned to his rightful master: and that it was also thought that if the numbers of these deserted slaves increased, they might join together with the Grigriquase Hottentots, or make themselves masters of them, and attempt to surprise and ruin some of our free inhabitants who live far apart from each other: in order to prevent these threatening troubles from taking place, and also to restore these fugitives, his Exc. and the Council of Policy unanimously resolved to reinforce the aforesaid ensign [Schrijver] and his company with a sergeant, a further ten Company servants and twenty freeburghers of Stellenbosch, and to despatch the assembled company over the aforesaid Olifants River to the Grigriquase Hottentots, and without the least shedding of blood, in the most accommodating and gentlest manner, under the guise of trade or exchange, to capture the aforesaid runaway slaves who might be found with them with orders (in case of unwillingness or refusal) to take one of the aforesaid Grigriquase captains or some of their women and children as hostages to the Castle, to stay here for as long as it takes for the aforesaid Grigriquase Hottentots to return the abovementioned slaves to the Company...". Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 13 Dec. 1696, p.307.

Not all Khoikhoi needed Company prompting to discourage fugitive slaves. *Drosters* were dangerous and it was extremely risky for runaways to count on Khoikhoi support. It should be appreciated that by 1700 the Khoikhoi were themselves refugees from the colony, anxious to avoid or repel all aggressive intruders into their territory. Unfortunately for them, during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, circumstances were particularly favourable for deserters. The colonial frontier petered out relatively close to Cape Town. As late as 1709 it was, indeed, still possible for fugitive slaves to skulk for days undetected in the thick bushes around the Liesbeeck River and Rondebosch.⁷ The dunes near Salt River and the sandy wastes of the Cape Flats also provided hiding places whilst Table Mountain itself was a domain of *drosters* well into the eighteenth century.⁸ The trouble with these peri-urban retreats was that inevitably, like a moth to a candle, the fugitives would steal food from the colonists and get caught. Proximity to the town was risky but the massive mountains of the Cape Fold System rose alluringly just behind the surrounding farms of the south-western Cape. Only after 1740 did these untamed ranges fall within the colonial frontier and to many fugitives it must have seemed as though all that stood between them and freedom was a very short journey to the horizon. At the same time the low population density of the frontier regions made it easy for runaways to move without detection. The result was that the early eighteenth century Cape frontier zone bristled with *drosters*, most of whom, as far as the Khoikhoi were concerned, were extremely undesirable characters.

We do not know what effect the Company's 1696 visit to the Chariguriqua had, but during the first decade of the eighteenth century the route up the west coast, beyond Groene Kloof and Saldanha Bay to the vicinity of Verlore Vlei and the Agter Piketberg, remained a favourite with deserters. The advantages of this route were that fugitives could survive by eating marine resources such as mussels and crayfish. Further progress northwards was usually unappealing because the countryside became drier and wilder. To the east runaways would have to brave the as yet unconquered Khoisan and the mountains behind the Olifants River. For this reason most *droster* groups tended to stall somewhere south of the Verlore Vlei. One group of slaves recaptured in 1707 had planned to hide in the "ver berge" and make their way to the Namaqua but they had not got very far.⁹ Even more typical, however, were the experiences of a group of *droster* slaves from Madagascar in 1706.

7. See for instance the evidence of the fugitive slaves Sato van Maccaser, Jan van Mallebar and Jacob van Mallebar in CA, VC 19, 7 May, 1709, pp.145-153.

8. See Ross, *Cape of Torments*, pp.64-66. In March 1736 it was thought that a severe fire in Cape Town might have been caused by slave or European *drosters* who were hiding out on Table Mountain. G.C. de Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 20 March, 1736, p.59.

9. CA, VC 18, 1707-1708, 5 Nov. 1707, pp.348-355.

This group had chosen the west coast route in an attempt to return to their home. During the course of their flight they attacked various Khoikhoi kraals in the vicinity of Saldanha Bay and abducted a Khoikhoi man by the name of Prins in the hope that he would show them the way to Madagascar. The gang then wandered as far as the Piketberg, killing two Khoikhoi at a colonial cattle-post on the Berg River before returning to the coast. Here they robbed a kraal called "Hoeties Kraal" at "Hoeties Baai" but the occupants fought back when the slaves attempted to steal their herds and flocks. Four of the slaves were killed and another, David, was eventually captured by the post-holder at Saldanha Bay.¹⁰

Incidents like these help to explain why the Khoikhoi were increasingly wary of colonial fugitives and likely to receive them with violence. In January 1712 it was reported that a recaptured slave had died because "The Hottentots beyond the mountains had beaten him most brutally; they had smashed the back of his skull, and with kieries cut his back as if it had been sliced with knives; his lips and eyes were so belaboured that there appeared hardly an hour's life in him".¹¹ Of twenty or thirty slaves who escaped in October 1712 it was rumoured that eight had been killed by the Overberg Khoikhoi.¹² As more and more instances of rough treatment at the hands of the Khoikhoi became known to would-be escapees a new pattern emerged which was clearly discernible to Mentzel in the 1730s:

Towards run-away slaves belonging to the colonists, the Hottentots feel a disgust which is not only inborn, but also founded on common sense. They know very well that a run-away slave can only preserve his life by robbing them of their cattle. Therefore, if they catch one of them, they hand them over to the nearest colonist, who then takes him away and surrenders him to the authorities. But should a fugitive slave succeed in reaching the Kaffirs, he would be protected against all danger, for they never give the slaves up, because they become their best fighters, more courageous than the Kaffirs themselves. They defend themselves desperately against the colonists, for fear of being caught and handed over to justice, preferring death to recapture. It is the aim of all such slaves, who band themselves together and plot to desert, to join up with the Kaffirs.¹³

10. CA, VC 17, 1705-1706, 5 Oct. 1706, p.678. It is more than likely that the present day "Hoedjies Bay" (the northern end of Saldanha Bay) is named after "Hoeties Kraal" and not, as Raper suggests, after the Dutch family name Oetgens van Waveren. Raper, *Place Names*, p.215.

11. CA, LM 18, Letters Received 1709-1718, 16 Jan. 1712.

12. "Some fugitive Javanese and Macassaren slaves having been followed up and only one caught, it was considered that the fugitives might do a great deal of harm - they were therefore followed on horseback by 10 men, and a reward of 3 Rds., was offered to the surrounding Hottentots for every one caught by them. 15 were captured and brought to the Castle and punished, the rest were, it is said, killed in a fight with the Hottentots, amongst them the ringleader, an Oriental exile sent hither last year". CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched 3 Jan. 1707-31 Dec. 1720, 4 April 1713, p.29. See also CA, LM 21, 22 Oct. 1712.

13. Mentzel, *Description of the Cape*, Vol. 3, p.300.

In time, as more and more Khoikhoi became absorbed within the colony and subject to the brutal exploitation of farm labour, a greater solidarity emerged between them and the slaves.¹⁴ But this common consciousness of colonial oppression was not present in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Instead, as Mentzel explains, the cruelty of the Khoikhoi was contrasted with a rather idealistic vision of life amongst the Xhosa. These expectations may have provided inspiration for a group of twenty to thirty slaves who revolted at Groot Constantia in 1713. They made a dash for the Hottentots Holland Mountains, hoping to reach "Caffersland", but most of them were killed or recaptured by the Khoikhoi over the mountains.¹⁵ We must presume that not all escapees were recaptured and that many did find succour in the distant interior. But the evidence of unsuccessful runaways suggests that the fate of such people, though obscure, was probably unpleasant.

A noteworthy feature of the early decades of the eighteenth century was that fugitive slaves often joined forces with criminals or deserters of European origin. On one level this is indicative of a common consciousness of oppression, for the treatment of Company soldiers and sailors was often worse than that of slaves.¹⁶ But it is significant that such instances of solidarity were rare after 1740 and this is because of processes at work in the frontier zone. By 1740 the colonial boundaries had extended to the point where white deserters could find employment and shelter with outlying colonists. Frontier farmers were always happy to have white supervisors working for them and if such men were fugitives from the law they could not demand high wages. As long as they were far enough away from the Company to avoid detection white deserters could merge with colonial frontiersmen. Before the 1730s, however, they were often too conspicuous to do so and for this reason, finding security in numbers, they fled together with slaves.

There is an interesting episode from the years 1706-1709 which illustrates some of the characteristics of the *droster* gangs of the northern frontier zone at this time. In 1706 a slave called Simon of Mallebaar fled to the vicinity of Vier en Twintig Rivieren where he fell in with various "vagabonden, schelmen en gaandieven". In 1709, together with some other slaves who had stolen sheep, tobacco, muskets and ammunition from their masters, Simon placed himself under the supervision of two European men (one called Jan Bakker and the other known only as Jan) who undertook to lead the group to "een ander land". The Europeans had compasses but after six weeks, somewhere over the Olifants River in "'t Cochemans land", their food supplies

14. See Penn, "Droster Gangs" and Ross, *Cape of Torments*, p.48.

15. CA, VC 20, 1711-1714, 24 Jan. 1713, pp.7-23.

16. A point made by Ross in *Cape of Torments*, p.22.

ran out. The group split up and the Khoikhoi attacked them, stealing their goods, smashing their guns and throwing their ammunition in the river. The survivors were later attacked by some "Namacquas of bosjesmans" and taken prisoner before being handed over to colonial justice. Simon was hanged.¹⁷

The case of a group of fugitives recaptured in 1712 also provides many telling details concerning the brotherhood of *droster* communities, the insecurity of life in the frontier zone and the limited options available to those wishing to escape to the interior.

Jan Jorisz, or Snijer (as he was known to his companions), had been born in Harlingen and joined the VOC as a sailor. His was not a distinguished career. In Batavia he had been caught after deserting from his ship and handed over to the "Caffers" for correction. For three consecutive half-days he had straddled the wooden horse of torture and then spent six months in chains. In Cape Town, in 1709, he was once more chastised by the "Caffers" for similar crimes and condemned to eight months hard labour on Robben Island without a salary. Shortly after his release, fearing punishment for drunkenness, he deserted again and began to sleep out in the veld, living from the knapsacks of shepherds. Then, at the Koeberg farm of a man called Ten Damme, he met a slave, Benjamin van Madagascar, with whom he entered into "brotherhood". In the hard world that had shaped both slave and sailor "brotherhood" was not an abstract concept. It is not known what rituals or ceremonies the men employed to solemnise their pact but from that moment on they were bound to each other.

Benjamin was Ten Damme's trusted overseer but the slave was rather free with his masters goods, distributing them to Snijer as well as to other "landloopers en vagebonden". These other recipients of Benjamin's generosity included four slaves from neighbouring farms. They wished to escape to Natal and Snijer, nothing loath, decided to accompany them. Benjamin gave him a musket (no doubt one of Ten Damme's), five or six bullets, a handful of powder, three loaves of bread and two knapsacks of meal. Thus equipped Snijer and the slaves - Titus, Abel, Jonker and Abraham - set off up the coast to beyond the Piketberg where they found "een groote valleij"(in all probability the Verlore Vlei) and it was here that the group split up. Snijer and Titus returned to the fringes of the colony, where the pickings were richer, but at the Paardeberg Titus went his own way. Not long after this Snijer was arrested and flung into the Castle's "Donker gat" to await trial.¹⁸

17. CA, VC 19, 1709-1710, 25 June 1709, pp.221-227.

18. CA, VC 20, 16 July 1712, pp.121-139.

It seemed as though Snijer's days of roving were over. He was not alone in the dark confines, for he had two cell mates, the slaves Scipio van Cormandel (commonly known as Cupitie and whipped and branded in 1699) and Moses van Bengalen. Both slaves were under sentence of death for having stolen property whilst on the run. But, in an unprecedented occurrence, all three prisoners succeeded in escaping from the "Donker Gat". How this escape was effected is not recorded though it is probably the only successful escape to have been made from the colony's most notorious place of incarceration. The fugitives hastened to Snijer's "brother" and benefactor, Benjamin van Madagascar. It was not long before they were joined by another desperate "rondlooper", a young sailor by the name of Nicolaas Ooms, whose credentials were almost as impressive as Jan Snijer's. Ooms had previously received a public flogging in Colombo for the "despicable wounding" of his under-helmsman and had been banished to the Cape for five years. Here he was sentenced to labour at the public works but he managed to unloosen his chains and seize a knife, threatening to kill anyone who tried to stop him. But somebody did overpower him and Ooms was returned to the chain-gang. Shortly afterwards, however, he broke his bonds again and escaped into the veld. Like many other deserters he drifted between the Tygerberg, the Paardeberg and Groene Kloof, finding shelter with shepherds, scavenging along the beach and, doubtless, slaughtering livestock. Eventually his wanderings took him to Ten Damme's farm at Koeberg where he found Snijer, Scipio and Moses. During a drinking session (with wine provided by the hospitable Benjamin) the four runaways pledged companionship ("maatschappij hebben gemaakt") and resolved "haer fortuyn te gaan zoeken en verder veldwaart in te lopen, vagabondeeren".¹⁹

Their first objective was Groene Kloof. On the way there they encountered a mounted slave who had some bread and meat on his horse. He was obliged to share his provisions. At the farm of the widow Basson they found the *knecht*, Jan ter Sluijs, who was also asked for food which he could not deny. The four pressed onwards to Petrus Tavenraat's farm where the slave Arend gave them some bread. The "landloopers" realised that despite this they were ill provisioned for the journey which they had undertaken and resolved to steal a gun. They had seen one at Jan ter Sluijs' hut so they decided to return there, much to the *knecht's* dismay. They greeted him with a "Goeden avont of tabee", to which he replied: "Tabee of niet, ik houw juijlij hier niet, of te wel juijlij moet vertrekken".²⁰ But he was a lone man in the night, on the edge of the colony. Jan Snijer had a

19. Ibid. "To seek their fortunes and go deeper into the veld, vagabonding."

20. Ibid. "Good evening or tabee". "Tabee or not, I'm not having you here, you must leave". "Tabee" was a common form of greeting in the colony and is thought to derive from the Dutch word for tobacco, "tabak", since the first words that most non-Europeans addressed to a pipe smoking Dutchman were invariably a request for tobacco.

club whilst Ooms displayed his favourite weapon - a knife. Scipio slipped into the hut and found two guns; a musket with a rifled barrel and a blunderbuss. There was also ammunition. "Mannen je doet my kragt en geweld aan",²¹ Jan ter Sluijs complained. At least, however, his life was spared and the thieves departed.

They left for the Paardeberg and found Lucas, a slave of Dirk van Schalkwijk, at his master's farm. Lucas provided food and slaughtered a sheep for them. He also gave them some tin table-board, so that they could make bullets, and showed them where Van Schalkwijk kept his gunpowder cartridges. With this extra ammunition the fugitives continued northwards, through the Swartland to the Piketberg where they slaughtered two sheep belonging to some nearby Khoikhoi. These Khoikhoi, seeing four strangers laden with meat, guessed that they had been robbed and asked for tobacco or dagga in exchange. The runaways promised that they would deliver some on their return and hurried onwards. The Khoikhoi raised the hue and cry. Shortly thereafter two shots whistled over their heads and looking behind them they saw two Dutchmen approaching on horseback. They dropped the meat and ran but it was obvious that they would be overtaken. Ooms stopped, turned, and fired the rifled musket. Snijer discharged the blunderbuss. It misfired. In the panic of re-loading, Ooms jammed his musket. With bullets flying about them the fugitives continued running but it was hopeless. The two sailors eventually fell to their knees and begged their pursuers for mercy. They and the slaves were captured and taken to the Cape. All were hanged. Benjamin van Madagascar was whipped, branded and mutilated by having his nose and ears cut off. He then served six months hard labour at the Company's works and was condemned to spend six years in chains.²²

Amongst the conclusions which emerge from the above accounts are that both slave and European *drosters* were capable of uniting in brotherhood and that their gangs were a danger to both Khoikhoi and colonists. Most *droster* groups were compelled to adopt a parasitic existence, preying off the societies of the frontier zone since they were unable to achieve long term self-sufficiency by themselves. As a result their presence in any given area was soon apparent and their discovery almost inevitable. Neither Khoikhoi nor colonists felt secure with such men at large and co-operated to ensure their capture. The life of a *droster* gang was therefore overshadowed by insecurity and the situation of such a gang even more vulnerable than that of their potential victims. After the smallpox epidemic of 1713 the Khoikhoi groups of the interior were weaker but the colonists were stronger so the situation facing *drosters* was not substantially

21. Ibid. "Men you are using force and violence against me".

22. Ibid.

safer. Nor could *drosters* always rely on a sympathetic welcome from the slaves they might encounter at the various outposts on their wanderings. Not every slave was as welcoming as Benjamin of Madagascar and some could be relied upon to alert the authorities. In 1724, for instance, three Dutch vagabonds were reported to be circulating in the Riebeeck-Kasteel district after having stolen food from the slaves at the farms.²³ The fact that all these *drosters* were white may have had some bearing on both their reception and behaviour. Nor should it be assumed that all *droster* gangs spared those whom from whom they extracted hospitality. Solitary hunters or stock-farmers would often have their throats cut by men who had nothing to lose by committing further crimes. In one gruesome instance a pursuing commando shot dead three of a group of nine runaway slaves and found a human finger - from a white person - amongst their possessions!²⁴

During the second decade of the century *droster* gangs seemed to grow in both numbers and audacity. After the mass escape from Groot Constantia in 1713 came the flight of forty Madagascan slaves from the Company between February and April 1716. A further eleven deserted on Christmas day of that year.²⁵ In January 1717 a group of fifteen slaves escaped from Stellenbosch²⁶ whilst in May 1719 twenty runaways attacked the Swart brothers on their isolated farm in the Overberg and stole 200 sheep.²⁷ It was obviously very tempting for farm slaves to join passing *droster* gangs, especially when there were other slaves in them. In January 1713 a gang of about thirty runaway slaves arrived at the farm of J. Elivier at Vier en Twintig Rivieren and "forced" seven other slaves to join them after they had bound the *knecht* and another servant. This gang was armed with guns and they liberated three further slaves from two neighbouring farms.²⁸

The fate of all of these escapees is unknown though a steady trickle of sentences was passed on recaptured slaves year after year. In a sense the records are misleading in that they do not reveal very much about successful escapees. It would be too much to suppose that every single *droster* was either recaptured or killed by the Khoikhoi. Later evidence suggests that some *drosters* did manage to survive for a long time even without Khoikhoi assistance. There must also have been

23. CA, LM 23, Letters Despatched 1723-1725, 23 Oct. 1724, p.170.

24. CA, LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 10 Oct. 1730.

25. G.C. de Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 5, 1716-1719, 22 Dec. 1716, p.120; 5 Jan. 1717, p.128.

26. CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched 1707-1720, 11 Jan. 1717, p.69.

27. CA, LM 19, Letters Received 1717-1726, 25 May 1719.

28. CA, LM 18, Letters Received 1709-1718, 6 Jan. 1714.

some who found protection amongst the Khoikhoi after the 1690s but there is no direct evidence of this. In any event there was no let up in the activity of *droster* gangs in the 1720s.

In 1724 the slaves of the Company meat contractors were attacked by *drosters* (whether white or black is not stated) whilst they were herding cattle north of Groene Kloof. The drovers were bound hand and foot whilst their herd was stolen.²⁹ In 1725 it was thought necessary to offer a reward of ten Rijksdaalders for recapturing a slave,³⁰ a feat which was, presumably, becoming a more dangerous and less frequent accomplishment. The next year, in January 1726, the strength and size of a group of runaways in the Saldanha Bay district was sufficient for the governor to order the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch to send out a commando against them. According to the reports of the post-holder at Saldanha there were more than twenty *drosters*, well supplied with guns and ammunition, causing great fear amongst the outlying farmers. The commando does not seem to have encountered the group but conflicting reports of its size, ranging from over forty to a mere six members, suggest that its membership fluctuated according to its fortunes.³¹ It was probably the same group of *drosters* which was reported as being active in the area in April 1726 when the farms of the widow Ten Damme and Tobias Mostert were plundered. Thirty Stellenbosch burghers were ordered to rendezvous with sixty men of the Cape burgher corps at Hendrik Eksteen's farm near Saldanha Bay. The membership of the group was thought to comprise both white and black vagabonds and a reward of ten Rijksdaalders was offered for each one captured - dead or alive. It is not known what success the commando had but the *drosters* probably disbanded as danger approached.³²

Not all white deserters felt constrained to join the ranks of roving slaves for not all were as desperate as Snijer and Ooms. But many soldiers and sailors of the VOC were keen to escape the murderous discipline and grinding poverty of life in the lower echelons of the Company. The expanding frontier offered such men many opportunities and, as the Company itself admitted, those who deserted were not inhibited by the thought that they would lose their pay since this was generally "nothing in particular".³³ There was doubtless a strong psychological impulse for freedom behind this flight to the frontier. In this respect it is instructive to read what Richard Slotkin has written about the vast frontier zone of the New World:

29. CA, LM 23, Letters Despatched 1723-1725, 12 May 1724, p.148.

30. Ibid., 6 Feb. 1725, p.200.

31. CA, LM 24, Letters Despatched 1726-1728, 24 Jan. 1726; CA LM 19, Letters Received 1717-1726, 26 Jan. 1726, 31 Jan. 1726.

32. CA, LM 24, Letters Despatched 1726-1728, 20 April 1726, pp.65-66.

33. CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched 1707-1720, 31 July 1719, p.112.

The most striking quality of life in the New World was the relative absence of social restraints on human behaviour, the relative ease with which a strong man could, by mastering the law of the wilderness-jungle, impose his personal dream of self-aggrandisement on reality. In Europe all men were under authority...[The New World] stimulated a monstrous ambition against authority, an obscene Faustian lust to satisfy nature by violating all bonds of obedience, religion and morality.³⁴

On a smaller scale the frontier zone of the northern Cape, like all frontiers of European expansion in the post-Columbian period, evoked similar emotions within the breasts of men grown tired of the confinements of their own repressive society. Few, perhaps, succeeded in surrendering totally to their "obscene Faustian lusts" but, at the very least, the haemorrhaging of such disordered cells from the ordered body of the Company's colony posed a grave threat to political authority.

Nothing seemed to irritate the Company more than the knowledge that certain of its servants had absconded and taken up the life of a vagabond on the frontier. In 1701 it was estimated that there were no fewer than fifteen such men roaming provocatively just beyond the Company's reach and their numbers increased year after year. Most of these deserters were well known to the authorities and their names were given to the *landdrost* to enable him to take steps to capture them.³⁵ It was most annoying, for instance, when the former overseer at the Company's post at Visserhoek, Claas Arentsz (nicknamed Leegenboeten), was seen going about the countryside with a gun over his shoulder.³⁶ But Company officials in the frontier zone were often extremely scared or reluctant to arrest their fellows. Thus in 1725 *Korporaal* Voetsman at Roodezand was sternly rebuked for having chatted to the deserter Philip Kalden (who was hiding at the widow of Coenraad Scheepers) without arresting him.³⁷ In 1730 the governor was especially concerned to capture Pieter Holbroek, a deserted soldier who was living with a slave woman in a cave in the mountains above the farm of Francois du Toit. A commando was sent to catch Holbroek but he had to be shot before he would leave the cave, after which he and his lover were sent to the Castle for interrogation.³⁸

Just as slaves sometimes ran away together in large groups, so too did Company soldiers desert in sizeable parties. Ten soldiers, including the ex-corporal of the Company post at Riviersonderend,

34. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, p.34.

35. CA, VC 15, 7 Oct. 1701, p.1007.

36. CA, LM 21, Letters Despatched 1707-1720, 3 Nov. 1717, p.78. Five other vagabonds are named in this letter.

37. CA, LM 23, Letters Despatched 1723-1725, 5 Feb. 1725, p.199.

38. CA, LM 25, Letters Despatched 1728-1732, 22 June 1730, p.349; CA, LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 21 June 1730.

fled into the interior in August 1727. All were recaptured.³⁹ In April 1729 thirteen armed soldiers of the garrison deserted to the Hottentots Holland mountains and became engaged in a skirmish with the pursuing dragoons. The leader of the deserters, Jan Busch, was killed, two others were wounded and the rest captured.⁴⁰ Although both of these mass desertions ended in failure they indicate that there were significant numbers of Company men who were desperate to exchange a life of misery for the promise of the frontier.

Company deserters were not, of course, the only white delinquents in the frontier zone and the VOC tried hard to monitor the activities of all its subjects. In theory every free colonist who went farming or hunting needed a permit or licence. The right to settle in, or indeed visit, the Cape interior, was subject to Company approval. Those who did not have their own loan-farm had to be registered as living with somebody who did. *Knechts* were considered to be bound by their contracts to work on the farms of their bosses.⁴¹ Single men, the "eenloopendes", were required to be "inschryven" (registered) with a particular colonist and to be registered on the lists of "eenlopende personen".⁴² Anyone, in other words, who was not either on the Company's lists or domiciled in a registered place could be considered as a vagrant or "rondlooper" and, as such, a trouble maker.

A perpetual and largely hopeless campaign was waged against such people. In 1687 the Council of Policy had complained that certain colonists were wandering about and living "dan hier dan daar" without ever notifying the authorities of their whereabouts. Others were guilty of hiring out their *knechts* to all and sundry without permission, even though they were on loan from the Company. This caused great chaos. It was stipulated that in the future all freeburghers who moved from the Cape to Stellenbosch would have to report to the Burgher *Heemraden* and register their names. In addition some were harbouring fugitives and deserters, both free-born and

39. CA, LM 24, Letters Despatched 1726-1728, 18 Aug. 1727, p.147; CA LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 19 Aug. 1727, 22 Aug. 1727.

40. CA, LM 25, Letters Despatched 1728-1732, 3 April 1729, 7 April 1729; CA LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 3 April 1729, 5 April 1729.

41. A great deal of work still has to be done on the subject of *knechts* but see R. Shell, "Land, Labour and Cape Families: The Introduction of Slavery and Serfdom" (unpublished paper presented in the Department of History, University of Cape Town, no date), pp.20-42.

42. See CA, I/STB 13/31, Alphabetiese Lyst Van Persone Wat op Veldtogten zyn uijt gegaan, beginnende met Nov. 1737 (1736-1744). In January 1735 the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* of Stellenbosch resolved that in future all those going inland would have to give their names to the secretary and report back once they had returned. CA, C 650, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein 1729-1736, 16 Jan. 1735.

slave, foreign and local. The Council therefore issued a stern warning that anyone who failed to report such people would be regarded as a traitor to the community and punished accordingly.⁴³

This was but one of many such edicts to be issued for, forty-two years later, *plakkaats* were still warning colonists of the growing tendency of harbouring such fugitives⁴⁴ whilst the number of "rondloopers" had simply expanded with the frontier. In 1737 *Landdrost* Lourensz of Stellenbosch complained of the number of men in his district who were simply not where they were supposed to be and "egter nooit een vaste woonplaats komen te houde, maer als vagabonden en land-lopers over al rondswerven, sonder dat men weet waar deselve te soeken of te vinden zijn...".⁴⁵ The implications of this were that such people could not be found. This caused great confusion in the muster rolls when it was time for the compulsory military exercises or commando duty. Furthermore, absentees committed all sorts of "schelmstukken" and acted as a bad example to youngsters in the district. Lourensz named six of the chief culprits and the Council of Policy resolved to cleanse the land of these "lediglopers" by forcing them to become Company sailors and banishing them from the Cape for five years.⁴⁶

Sometimes the settler community had an interest in protecting these roving "landloopers" who could be sponsored to undertake dangerous hunting trips or bartering expeditions without implicating more respectable burghers. Most frontier farmers could use the labour of a man who was grateful for food, shelter and confidentiality. Widows, in particular, were often well-disposed towards those who offered them their services.⁴⁷ There were, of course, many rogues and thieves amongst the rootless frontier colonists but, on the whole, white settlers were able to protect themselves against these undesirables far better than the Khoikhoi could.

The impact of these "illegal" frontiersmen on the indigenous societies of the interior is a crucial issue but difficult to quantify owing to the lack of evidence. The perpetrators of evil deeds did not often leave witnesses or advertise their accomplishments. It is also debatable whether there was much to choose between lawful or unlawful European residents of the frontier zone when it came to their destructive impact. Contemporary observers, however, were in no doubt that vagabonds

43. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 3, 1681-1707, 25 Dec. 1687, p.181.

44. CA, LM 25, Letters Despatched 1728-1732, 28 March 1729, p.278.

45. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 1735-1739, 3 Dec. 1737, p.168-169: "...do not actually have any fixed abode, but wander about as vagabonds and rovers, without anyone being able to ascertain their whereabouts..."

46. Ibid. "Lediglopers" is probably best translated as "shiftless or worthless idlers".

47. The case of Estienne Barbier (in chapter three above) is a good example of the type of hospitality that personable fugitives could expect from widows.

and freebooters were behind the various outbreaks of violence on the colony's frontiers in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In 1715 Frans van der Stel was speaking for many when he urged the government to appoint a good *landdrost* who would: "... search for and exterminate all vagrants, who are continually wandering about the country, remain unregistered, and with some malevolent residents, impoverish the Hottentots and embitter them against our nation, by means of robbery and other atrocious acts of violence".⁴⁸

By this date, however, much of the damage had already been done and vagrants would have had to travel far to find any Khoikhoi groups to impoverish. It is noteworthy that at times of frontier disturbance or Khoisan resistance there seemed to be an abatement in *droster* activity. With vengeful commandos and Khoisan raiders abroad the frontier zone was not a safe place for fugitives.

After 1730 there were very few reports of fugitive gangs active in the areas south of the Piketberg. The colony had now expanded to the extent that it was no longer easy for refugees to evade capture around the Saldanha Bay, Groene Kloof or Stellenbosch districts. Discontented slaves might suddenly gather together, attack their masters, plunder the farm house and run away - as happened in the Tygerberg in 1738⁴⁹ - but they could not stay in such a thoroughly colonised area for long. The Roodezand was reported as still being full of fugitives, both slaves and Europeans, in 1728⁵⁰ and runaway slaves were hiding in the caves of the Paarl Mountain as late as 1742.⁵¹ But the main area of *droster* activity was now around the Piketberg and to the north in areas such as Renoster Hoek (which lies north of the Piketberg and south of the Olifants River Mountains) or the Olifants River.

This shift in focus became evident in September 1731 when a group of runaway slaves fired on a commando at Renoster Hoek and killed the burgher Samuel de Beer. Four of the gang were captured but *Landdrost* Lourensz was aware that there were other fugitives at large, including "certain Europeans living at the Piketberg".⁵² A second commando was sent to deal with this menace but the *drosters* could not be found.⁵³ In November 1731 two fugitive slaves were shot

48. CA, LM 18, Letters Received 1709-1718, 17 April 1715.

49. De Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 9, 17 Aug. 1738, p.220.

50. CA, LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 12 Nov. 1728.

51. CA, C 457, Inkomende Briewe April 1740-Dec 1740, 16 Feb. 1742.

52. CA, C 650, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein 1729-1736, 10 Sept. 1731, 12 Sept. 1731; CA LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 11 Sept. 1731.

53. CA, C 650, 12 Sept. 1731.

dead whilst stealing sheep from a Piketberg farmer. Lourensz learnt from a third, who was taken captive, that the *droster* group he was after had split up because of quarrels and that they had returned from beyond the Olifants River (where they had been) to hide around the Piketberg.⁵⁴ It is not known whether the rest of this group were ever caught but in March 1736 another commando was sent out behind the Piketberg to deal with fugitive slaves. On this occasion two slaves were apprehended and one of them was shot dead when he refused to surrender. The second escaped whilst being taken back to Stellenbosch.⁵⁵

During the frontier war of 1739 it was too perilous for fugitives to roam the northern borders but, shortly after fighting stopped in 1740, desertions resumed. The Company was still plagued by the desertion of its employees, as can be seen from a resolution passed by the Council of Policy in 1745. Noting an increase in desertions it ordered an increase in the punishment for offenders. A recaptured deserter would be severely whipped at the place of execution, branded and placed in irons to serve as a convict for ten years without pay. Furthermore, it was decreed that anyone convicted of harbouring or assisting a deserter would suffer the same punishment. If these measures failed to have an effect the Council proposed to apply the same penalty as existed in Bengal, namely, death.⁵⁶ In Stellenbosch, meanwhile, the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* had decided in a resolution of 1743 to offer a reward of ten Rijksdaalders for slaves recaptured over the Olifants River, six Rijksdaalders for slaves on the colonial side of the river and three Rijksdaalders for those on the south side of the Piketberg or Hottentots Holland Mountains.⁵⁷ This revealing gradation suggests that fugitive slaves were no longer as great a threat as they had been in the south-western Cape. They continued, however, to plague the colonists of the Piketberg and Olifants River areas for many years.

In 1755, for instance, a group of fourteen runaway slaves was apprehended by *Veldkorporaal* Jacob Gildenhuysen and his commando in a kloof of the Piketberg. The *drosters* would not surrender and instead brandished knobkerries and shouted loud defiance. They also had a musket, two pistols, gun-powder and a cutlass; but when the shooting started they were no match for the colonists. Five slaves were shot dead and the rest recaptured. Their number included a female slave, slaves from local farmers and slaves from farmers of the south-western Cape.⁵⁸

54. CA, LM 20, Letters Received 1726-1732, 13 Nov. 1731.

55. CA, C 650, 12 March 1736.

56. CA, LM 58, Resolutions of the Council of Policy 1743-1745, 19 Oct. 1745.

57. CA, C 652, 26 July 1743.

58. CA, I/STB 3/10, Criminal Records 1749-1758, 19 Nov. 1755.

A similar incident occurred in May 1775 near Gerrit Smit's farm, "de Drooge Rijs Kloof" behind the Piketberg. Smit discovered that his barn had been broken into and that some wheat was missing. He called a friend, Gideon van Zijl, and with two servants followed the spoor of the barefooted robbers. They found four fugitive slaves hiding in a bush. The slaves all had knives and Smit ordered them to throw down their blades and approach him one by one. The four began talking in Malay, which Smit did not understand. When they began to advance in a menacing fashion he shouted at them, in Portuguese, to get back and drop their weapons. Still they advanced. Smit told Van Zyl, who had the only other musket, to shoot one in the legs. The shot was fired. The slave fell down. But the other three shouted "Amok! Amok! Matta Garra!" and charged.⁵⁹ Van Zyl had to flee because his musket was now unloaded. Smit, though, put a bullet through the closest *droster* and killed him. The other two then chased Smit for one hundred and fifty yards before returning to their original position at the bush. The two colonists reloaded and once more ordered the slaves to drop their knives. This time one of them shouted "Bie! Bie!" and rushed at Smit. It was suicide. The slave died, shot through the body, with the knife still in his hand. The survivor told Smit that they had escaped from the Company works at Cape Town.⁶⁰

A closer inspection of these, and other, incidents concerning fugitives in the years after 1740 reveals that the expansion of the colony would seem to have had a transforming effect on the composition of *droster* gangs.⁶¹ From about this stage onwards whites and slaves went their separate ways. The fugitive gangs that fled beyond the Olifants River no longer contained white deserters and the reasons for this are linked to the dynamics of frontier expansion. Between 1740 and 1770 the boundaries of the colony advanced rapidly to a point beyond which further progress was problematic. In some directions environmental conditions made pastoralism an impossibility whilst in others Khoisan or Xhosa resistance was too strong to be swept aside.⁶² In these circumstances fugitives would have to be really desperate to venture into the doubly inhospitable interior and, for the most part, white deserters did not have to, since they were readily absorbed by the far flung frontier farmers. Slaves, on the other hand, could decide whether they wished to

59. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Criminal Records 1759-1782, 8 May 1775. Eastern slaves, who came from a culture where "running amok" was a ritualised form of violence against a hopeless situation, often ran amok as a form of resistance (invariably suicidal) against slavery at the Cape. See Edna Bradlow, "Running amok and its historical significance", *Cabo*, 5, 1, 1990, pp.8-11. For other examples see the Constantia slave uprising of 1713 (CA, VC 20, 24 Jan. 1713, pp.7-23 and p.146 above) and the uprising of *bandieten* on Robben Island in 1751 (CA, CJ 359, Criminele Process Stuken 1751, pp.319-371 and N. Penn, "From Penguins to Prisoners: Robben Island, 1488-1805" in N. Penn, H. Deacon and N. Alexander, *Robben Island: The politics of rock and sand* (Cape Town, 1992), pp.26-27.

60. CA, 1/STB 3/11, 8 May 1775.

61. See Penn, "Droster Gangs", for a consideration of fugitive groups in the second half of the eighteenth century.

62. See chapter five below.

attempt the perilous journey beyond the colony's boundaries or to hide out in the inaccessible mountains within the colony. Both courses were adopted and the Cedarberg Mountains in particular served as a place of refuge for runaway slaves until well into the nineteenth century.⁶³

"BASTAARDS", "BASTAARD-HOTTENTOTS" AND OORLAMIS

Slaves and Company servants were not the only fugitives to flee from the colony after 1740. From this date onwards there is increasing evidence that entirely new categories of colonial subjects were moving outwards and away from the colony in an attempt to avoid economic, social and political oppression. The new fugitives were people who were described, in the discourse of the day, as "Bastaards" or "Bastaard-Hottentots" and although their presence is most clearly marked in the records after 1770 their "pre-history", shadowy though it is, deserves some attention. Not only were such people active within the frontier zone, they were, in many cases, products of the frontier zone. Indeed, some of them were doubtless themselves the descendants of colonial fugitives and frontier Khoikhoi.

The word "Bastaard" was used by contemporaries to refer to people who had been born of miscegenous relationships.⁶⁴ The term described a wide range of people of differing status and the nuances of its meaning changed with changing attitudes. Quite clearly, however, the word implied the stigma of illegitimate birth as well as the idea of racially mixed parentage. In the Cape colonial context there were three major instances of miscegenation: that of Europeans with slaves; that of Europeans with Khoikhoi; and that of slaves with Khoikhoi. The first instance was relatively rare on the Cape frontier (though fairly common in Cape Town) and the status of the resultant children varied from case to case. Some children, especially girls, might become absorbed within white society whilst other children, especially if they were dark-skinned males, might become slaves.⁶⁵ The offspring of Europeans and Khoikhoi were ostensibly free but, as a number of studies have shown,⁶⁶ the status of "Bastaards", though superior to that of slaves, Khoikhoi and San, declined - economically, socially and politically - throughout the eighteenth

63. See Penn, "Droster Gangs" for the *drosters* of the Cedarberg.

64. For a discussion of the word "Bastaard" see M. Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to c.1840: The rise and decline of the Griqua people" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*, 2nd edition, pp.369-370. See also Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.170-179.

65. For a discussion of race, class and social status in eighteenth century Cape society see R. Elphick and R. Shell, "Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795" in Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, pp.184-239; H. F. Heese, *Groep Sonder Grense* (Bellville, 1984); W.M. Freund, "Race in the Social Structure of South Africa 1652-1836" in *Race and Class*, XVII, (1976); H. Giliomee, "Eighteenth Century Cape Society: Culture, Race and Class", *Social Dynamics*, (1983).

66. See sources cited in footnote 65 above. See also J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People*, pp.10-13.

century. This process was first experienced in areas of high white population density close to Cape Town where mixed marriages became less and less socially acceptable and where it became more and more difficult for "Bastaards" to acquire loan-farms.

Elphick and Shell have remarked that: "In the newly settled pastoral regions ... considerable miscegenation, but not intermarriage, occurred".⁶⁷ In the early phase of colonial expansion white men far outnumbered white women in the frontier zone and, indeed, in the Cape as a whole. Before the heroic childbearing efforts of white women succeeded, several generations down the line, in rectifying the sexual imbalance within white society, white frontiersmen struggled to find white wives. Biological imperatives, however, combined with the unmonitored freedom of the frontier zone to promote sexual conduct, and sexual relationships, which would have been censured in the more settled areas of the colony. Whilst "civilised" observers of white Cape society displayed a prurient revulsion when describing the sexual charms of Khoikhoi women, white frontiersmen had fewer qualms. They slept with Khoikhoi women but, for the most part, declined to marry them. According to Elphick and Shell very few marriages at the Cape church (and none at Stellenbosch which was the magisterial seat of the northern frontier zone) were obviously mixed marriages and it does indeed seem that the majority of "Bastaards" were born out of wedlock.⁶⁸

This state of affairs was partly due to the paucity of churches in the northern Cape frontier zone. It was only after Governor Gustaaf van Imhoff visited the outlying districts of the Cape in 1743 that a decision was made to establish a church in the Swartland and a church between Roodezand and Vier en Twintig Rivieren. Van Imhoff had been shocked by the "sorgeloosheid en onweetenheid" (carelessness and ignorance) of a large number of frontier farmers concerning religious matters so that it seemed to him: "dat het aldaar eerder na eene versaaemeling van blinde heijdenen als naa eene colonie van Europeers en Christenen komt te gelijken".⁶⁹

A lack of churches might certainly have contributed, as Van Imhoff feared, to a barbarisation of frontier farmers and a careless attitude towards the sacrament of marriage. But the qualification ought perhaps to be that it was Christian intermarriage that did not occur. We have already noted how in 1738 Willem van Wijk "took to wife, Hottentot fashion a near relative of the chief,

67. Elphick and Shell, "Intergroup relations", p.199.

68. Ibid., p.199.

69. Resolutions of Council of Policy, 14 Feb. 1743, in G.C. de Wet (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. X 1740-1743 (Pretoria, 1984), p.226.

conducting himself in the matter and clothing himself at the time as a Hottentot"⁷⁰ and later evidence from Namaqualand suggests that white colonists were adopting Khoikhoi wedding customs in the 1770s.⁷¹ It seems that although some of the frontier colonists saw little reason to marry, in a Christian fashion, the Khoikhoi women with whom they slept, they were somewhat more punctilious about providing a Christian baptism for the offspring of such relationships. The Christening book of the Swartland church (the most north-westerly church in the colony for most of the eighteenth century) has a special section - "Gedoopte Bastaarts 1752-1769" - and many of the names there are typical Dutch surnames.⁷² It is to be assumed that these "Gedoopte Bastaarts" enjoyed a status in society superior to that of unbaptised "Bastaards", Khoikhoi or slaves but the very fact that their names were recorded separately is evidence of discrimination. Their precise status no doubt depended on the details of their family background and the social climate of the district into which they were born. Favoured children of respected colonists probably passed unobtrusively into the ranks of colonial society, suffering no discrimination on account of their mixed blood. Others were not so fortunate.

Lichtenstein, an observer at the Cape between 1803-1806, commented on the difference between the attitudes of colonists towards the "Bastaards" in the mid-eighteenth century and at the end of the century. He recognised that the crucial test was whether or not they were allowed to obtain and retain property. Initially, he noted, a "Bastaard" might acquire property after having worked as a farm overseer when, on the death of the master, the servant "would often assume his name; and not infrequently sought himself some little spot, to which he retired with all belonging to him, and gained a subsistence for himself and his family by the breeding of cattle".⁷³ "Bastaards" who succeeded in possessing farms of this sort did not, apparently, attach the same importance to legitimising their claims by the prompt payment of loan-farm rental; or perhaps the delayed payment was because their claims were not readily recognised by the authorities. Whatever the reasons however, it would seem that "Bastaards" ended up with the least desirable, often unregistrable, land within the colony or else with land outside the colony. As Lichtenstein observed:

The white children of the colonists did not hesitate to make use of the right of the strongest and to drive their half yellow relations out of the places where they had fixed their abodes. These Bastard Hottentots were then obliged to seek an asylum in more remote parts, till at length, driven from the Sack River as they had been

70. See p.98 above.

71. See p.288 below.

72. J.A. Heese, "Onderwys in Namakwaland 1750-1940", (D. Ed., Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1942), p.80.

73. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.303.

before from the Bokkeveld, nothing remained for them but to retreat to the Orange River.⁷⁴

The availability of land did not, however, become a crucial issue until the 1770s. Before this date the expansion of the frontier, coupled with the low population density and the relatively weak demographic presence of adult male "Bastaards", served to mask the fact that, once the frontier began to close, racial criteria would help to determine access to farms.

The offspring of slaves and Khoikhoi were known as "Bastaard-Hottentots" and, in certain quarters, were considered to constitute a category of unfree labour from a fairly early stage. In 1721, for instance, some freeburghers of the Stellenbosch district had written to the government to ask for permission to bind in service, for a certain number of years, the children of slave and Khoikhoi unions.⁷⁵ The issue seems to have lain dormant until 1775 when the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* of Stellenbosch decreed that "Bastaard-Hottentot" children should be bound to serve their masters until the age of twenty-five.⁷⁶ But this early interest in the matter is probably indicative of both common attitudes and common practice, at least in the more thoroughly colonised areas of the south-western Cape. The trend was towards a decline in the status of "Bastaard-Hottentots" and, ultimately, "Bastaards" too. Though this process was delayed on the open frontier individuals of mixed racial descent could not have been oblivious to the increasing and encompassing forms of discrimination practised against their kind within the colony. Eventually they would be faced by a choice: to stay within the colony and accept their declining status, or to move beyond the colony and assert their independence.

Like the *drosters* who had preceded them the "Bastaard" or "Bastaard-Hottentot" individuals who decided to move beyond the colony often gathered together in groups. These, in turn, formed the nucleus of societies which later became known as Oorlams.⁷⁷ To some extent the Oorlams were larger, more successful versions of *droster* gangs. They were composed of the same motley collection of colonial fugitives but were distinguished by their having achieved a measure of political independence, economic viability, social cohesion and military capability which enabled them to secure themselves in a region beyond the reach of colonial commandos. Although there were runaway slaves amongst them it would be erroneous to think of these groups as maroon

74. Ibid., p.304.

75. A.J. Boeseken, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 6, 1720-1723, 2 Sept. 1721, pp.128-129.

76. CA, C 655, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1771-1779, 28 Dec. 1773.

77. For a discussion of Oorlams see Du Bruyn, "The Oorlams Afrikaners" and Nienaber, *Stamname*, p.794-803.

communities since the adherence of many Khoikhoi, San and "Bastaard-Hottentot" members gave them a strongly indigenous component.

The word "Oorlam" is, perhaps, preferable to the pejorative terms which it replaced but it should be stressed that its usage was not as widespread or common as recent research would suggest. Until the late eighteenth century it was somewhat of a floating signifier and its meaning only began to solidify once the groups which it denoted themselves acquired a more stable identity.⁷⁸ An 1805 definition of the word has it that Oorlams are "Hottentots who come from the upper country (i.e. beyond the frontier) and are born and bred with the farmers; most of whom understand and speak the low Dutch language".⁷⁹ The paradox of this definition is obvious: Oorlams are people living outside the colony but possessing attributes acquired inside the colony. Du Bruyn states, more generally, that the term refers to "all Khoikhoi and Basters who took up employment with whites and acquired European skills ... particularly a knowledge of the use of horses and firearms".⁸⁰

Such knowledge could only be obtained through contact with the colonists and was often dearly bought. Quite apart from the essential skills of marksmanship and horsemanship it was also necessary to acquire gunpowder, muskets, horses and all the other commodities that were highly prized: tobacco, brandy, hats and clothes of European style. From their contact with the hunters and robbers of the open frontier the proto-Oorlams learnt how to dispose of ivory, hides and stolen livestock. From their labour with white stock-farmers they learnt both low Dutch and the value of organisation along the lines of the *commando* system. Belatedly, some learnt the rudiments of Christianity, thinking that its possession would preserve them from the status-reducing threats of the closing frontier. And, ultimately, many learnt that the best they could aspire to was a marginal position.

Oorlam identity, as well as the status of "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots", evolved slowly. It would be quite wrong to believe that either the categories or conditions of their existence were formalised in the first half of the eighteenth century. The fluid nature of both racial attitudes and

78. Legassick believes that the word was applied by extra-colonial Khoikhoi to those Khoikhoi who had been in colonial service and that the latter group came to accept the designation. See Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to 1840", p.410 n.49. In the seventeenth century the Dutch called sailors who were homeward-bound from the east "Orangh lammen", from the Malay "orang lama", meaning a person who has had long and wide experience. Afrikaans: "Oorlam(s)". The implication was also that they were lawless fellows. See H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal Of Jan Van Riebeeck*, Vol. 1, 1651-1655 (Cape Town, 1952), p.223.

79. Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to 1840", pp. 368-369.

80. Du Bruyn, "Oorlams", p.2.

identities in the northern Cape frontier zone at this time is well illustrated by the events surrounding the disappearance of a particular individual named Jacob Nortje in 1749. Nortje's name was registered in the roll of "eenloopendes" and the man for whom he worked was a certain Willem Odendaal.⁸¹ In February 1749 a Khoikhoi named Andries came across Nortje, whom the records describe as a burgher, on the farm called "Matroose Craal". He was surprised to see that Nortje had taken off his Dutch clothes and donned a Khoikhoi kaross and cap in their place. In response to Andries' questions Nortje eventually confessed to having shot his *baas*, Odendaal, by accident and said that he had then thrown away his musket and clothes. He had obtained Khoikhoi clothes from Knapkoek, a Khoikhoi hunter of the Haegel Kraal. Thus attired Nortje left Andries, saying that he was on his way to the Piketberg.⁸²

Not long after this Daniel Bokkelenberg, who owned the farm "Het Cruijs" behind the Piketberg, told some of his neighbours that it seemed a runaway "jong" (i.e., a slave) of David Malan was hiding on the farm of Abraham Mouton and pretending to be a "Bastaard-Hottentot" called Claas. Bokkelenberg and two others went secretly to Mouton's farm one night and took the suspicious character captive. The prisoner then confounded them by claiming to be Jacob Nortje and neither a "jong" nor a "Bastaard-Hottentot". He explained that he had shot Odendaal in the back of the neck by accident whilst the two of them had been stalking an eland. Odendaal's widow, Magdalena le Roux, was subsequently able to confirm that Nortje (whom she described as a "landbouwer") and Odendaal had indeed gone out hunting together, barefooted and friendly, but that the two horses had returned later without their riders. Upon investigation the body of Odendaal was discovered with a bullet wound in the neck.⁸³

Nortje's strange behaviour suggests that the death of Odendaal was indeed accidental and that it had triggered a series of complex psychological responses within him. It would seem, to put it mildly, that the trauma of the event had induced a profound identity crisis within a person whose sense of self-identity was already insecure. It is obvious from the responses of the various people who encountered Nortje that he had the official status of a burgher, albeit of the low class, "eenloopende" variety. It is also clear that he did not look quite white, being able to pass himself off as a "Bastaard-Hottentot" and being mistaken for a slave. We cannot know whether these aspects of his appearance bothered Nortje but we can speculate that they did when we consider his response to killing Odendaal. To kill a fellow human is to break powerful taboos and often

81. CA, 1/STB 13/31 Alfabetiese Lyst Van Persone Wat op Veldtogten zyn uijt gegaan (1736-17440).

82. CA, 1/STB 3/10, Criminal Records 1749-1758, 21 Feb. 1749.

83. Ibid., 13 March 1749, 11 April 1749, 21 April 1749.

places the killer in a liminal state, both socially and psychologically. The killer is in a state of impurity and social alienation. Only the performance of cleansing rituals, akin to those of rites of passage, can reintegrate the individual into his society and restore his psychic equilibrium.⁸⁴ It is significant that Nortje's first response to killing Odendaal was to divest himself of his clothes, thereby attempting to cleanse himself of the deed but also to divest himself of the colonial identity which he had transgressed. He then adopted one of the many other identities close to hand in the frontier zone - that of a Khoikhoi. Later, however, he both took and was given further frontier identities and it was only on being captured that he seemed to re-accept his status as burgher, perhaps so as to stave off punishment. In the event, however, Nortje managed to break the chains which had been put around his neck and escape from the cellar where he had been locked up. He was not found again and we may suppose that he continued to live as a fugitive, in the liminal state of the frontier zone, under his multiple identities.

The above evidence suggests that it is extremely difficult to generalise about racial categories and identities in an open frontier situation. In 1749 the status of someone like North was, even to himself, unclear. By the 1770s, however, as the colonial frontier ceased to expand and processes of closure intensified, more and more "Bastards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" began to leave the colony in order to avoid the inferior status which was being forced upon them by white colonists. The reasons for the deterioration will be discussed in the following chapter. It should be noted, though, that in taking the positive step of fleeing the colony these non-white fugitives began to establish, for themselves, a common Oorlam identity. In time their ranks would be augmented by numbers of other frontier fugitives, both *droster* gangs (which, as we have noted, included fewer and fewer European members) and refugee Khoikhoi. Before considering these further developments, however, it is necessary to make some concluding remarks about the role of fugitives in the frontier zone.

Fugitives were, as we have already stated, the true pioneers of the colonial frontier. They were always in search of the outer limits of the colony in order to pass beyond them. In so doing, paradoxically, they only served to extend the colonial frontier for they, unwittingly, took the colony with them. It is, perhaps, a moot point whether their impact on Khoisan societies was more or less devastating than that of the *trekboers* on their heels. Ultimately, both *trekboers* and

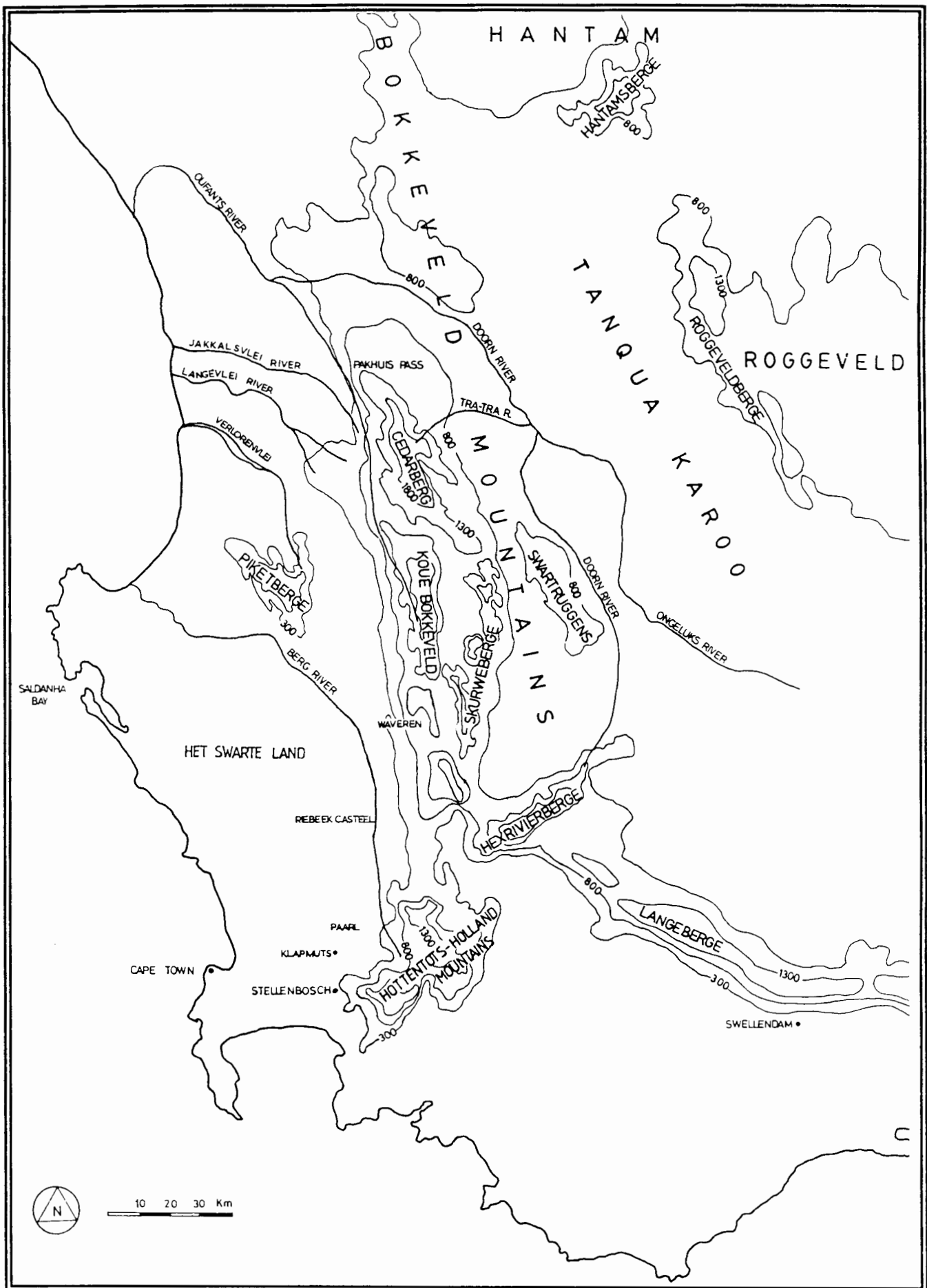
84. My analysis has been informed by Mary Douglas, *Purity And Danger: An Analysis Of The Concepts Of Pollution And Taboo* (London, reprint 1989); R. Buijtenhuis, *Essays on the Mau Mau: Contributions to Mau Mau Historiography*, (Leiden, 1982); Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War One* (Cambridge, 1979).

fugitives were part of the same frontier zone. It is for this reason that one should not make too great a distinction between them.

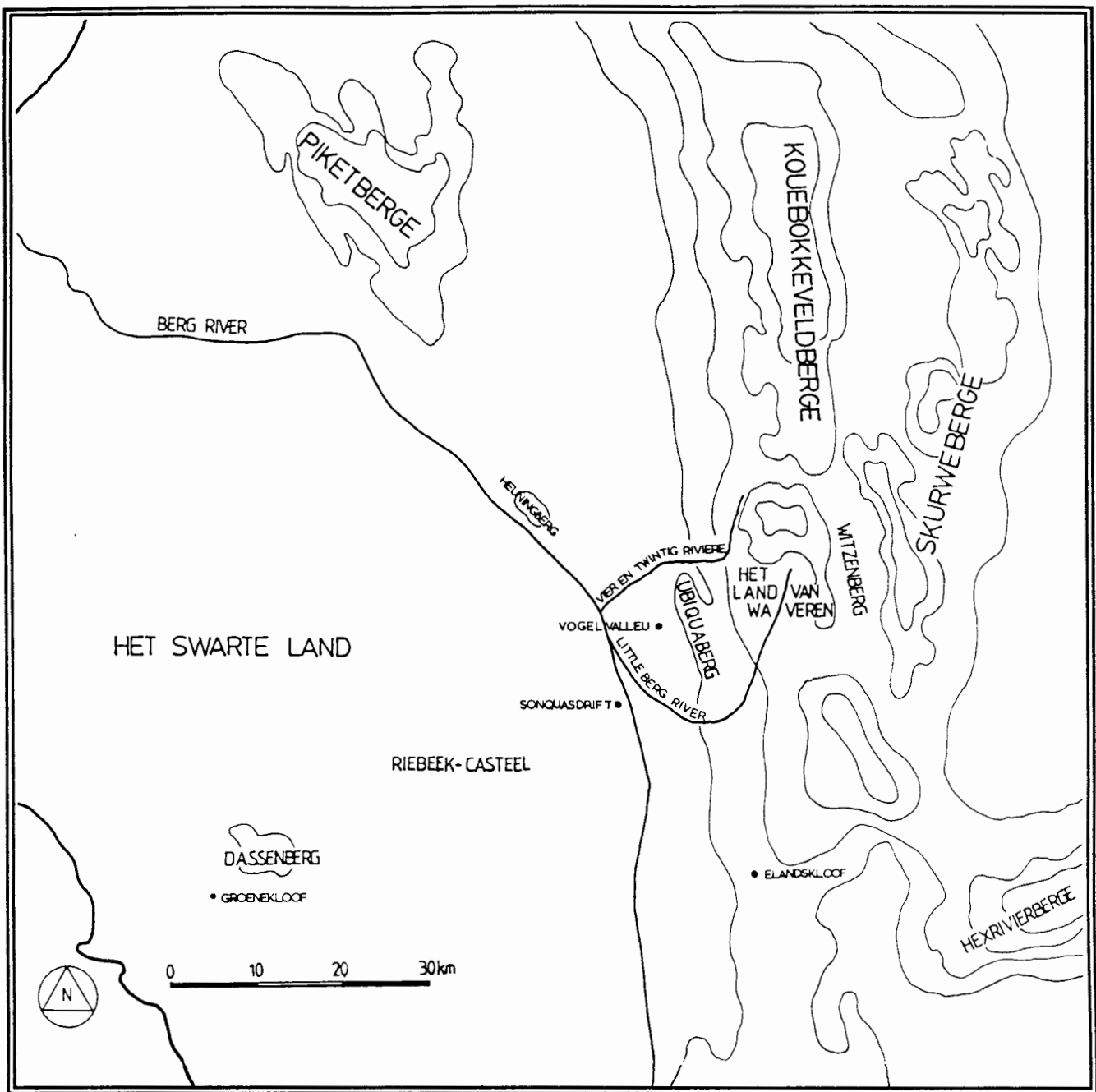
Although it has been convenient for the purposes of our discussion to treat the subject of fugitives within the frontier zone separately from that of frontier farmers, or other officially authorised colonial frontiersmen, this should not be interpreted as endorsing Guelke's view that "there were two different frontiers at the Cape inhabited by two different kinds of European settler".⁸⁵ The "fugitive frontier" is certainly not the same as Guelke's "frontier of inclusion", nor does the frontier of colonial farmers correspond to his "frontier of exclusion". However one chooses to describe the processes and peoples of the Cape colony's frontier zone, and whatever concepts one uses to enhance one's understanding of events, it is not helpful to construct mutually exclusive principals of binary opposition. Guelke's idea that there was a frontier of "exclusion" - pioneered by a fragment of south-western Cape society that was primarily white, middle class, orthodox and dedicated to the maintenance of an exclusivist European way of life - and a frontier of "inclusion" - pioneered by single white men who hunted, traded and tended livestock, did not settle and who constituted a community involved in the "blending of cultures and people within an informal social framework"⁸⁶ - is simply unrealistic. In the first place it draws attention away from the non-European frontiersmen and women, suggesting that their role was a reactive, rather than an active one. What about the *drosters* and "Bastaards" of the frontier zone? Secondly, it implies that the contradictory impulses which he describes could not both be present (along with other "obscene Faustian lusts" or pious Calvinistic, capitalistic values) simultaneously in the body of one individual. There was nothing to prevent today's murderous cross-cultural robber-rapist from becoming tomorrow's white-wived, prosperous farmer. In the inchoate flux of an open frontier zone individual identities, cultural certainties, political strength and economic fortunes fluctuated wildly. It was only as the frontier began to close that these shifting values began to crystallise and, in the Cape's northern frontier zone, processes of closure only began to occur once the frontier ceased to expand.

85. Guelke, "Two Frontier Communities", p.419.

86. Ibid., p.434.



THE NORTHERN CAPE FRONTIER ZONE, 1700 - 1740



THE NORTHERN CAPE FRONTIER ZONE, c. 1705

Part II
Khoisan, Colonists and Commandos, 1740-1802

dié land vra water en hy kry bloed

Breyten Breytenbach,
'N Seisoen in Die Paradys

Khoisan and Colonists of the Cape Interior, 1740-1772

INTRODUCTION

After the war of 1739 and the crushing defeat of Khoisan resistance in the Sandveld and the Bokkeveld the colonial frontier advanced rapidly. Once the *trekboer* pioneers moved into the areas north and east of the Bokkeveld, they left behind them the narrow and mountainous confines of the western coastal belt, and entered the spacious but arid expanses of the interior. At first, Khoisan resistance to this advance seemed slight, even negligible. This, at least, is the impression given by the records, which are sparser for this period of frontier history than for any other time during the eighteenth century. Such records as do exist contain far fewer references to conflict between the Khoisan and the *trekboers* than do the records for the pre-1740 and post-1770 periods. But it is also possible that the rapid advance of the *trekboers* dispersed the colonists to such an extent that, initially, their impact on the Khoisan and environmental resources of the interior was limited and, therefore, fairly painlessly absorbed.

Between 1740 and 1770 the area of land available to the colonists increased tenfold whereas the population of the frontier farmers grew at a much slower rate. Guelke has estimated that, throughout the colony as a whole, there were only 225 stock holders in 1746 and 600 in 1770.¹ There was a mean population density of only one free person per ten square miles on the frontier,² a fact which helps to explain both the paucity of information from that zone and the reduced conflict during the period 1740 to 1770.

Colonial pastoralists quickly established loan-farms for themselves along the Roggeveld escarpment in the north-east and amongst the rolling hills of the Kamiesberg to the north. By the early 1770s, however, it was becoming clear that any advance beyond these points was going to be extremely problematic. The frontier had, in fact, ground to a halt and the ensuing stasis

1. L.T. Guelke, "The Early European Settlement of South Africa" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1974), p.215.

2. L.T. Guelke, "Frontier Settlement in Early Dutch South Africa", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 66, no.2 (March 1976), p.34.

precipitated a major crisis, resulting in fundamental social, political and economic transformations throughout the frontier zone.³

There were two major reasons why the *trekboer* advance was halted in the 1770s: military and environmental. In the first place it was at about this time that widespread and determined Khoisan resistance broke out on an unprecedented scale along the length and breadth of the frontier zone. The colonial response was to intensify and institutionalise the commando system. Despite bitter and prolonged fighting no military solution seemed possible and it was in the crucible of the struggle that the frontier zone began to close - with profound consequences for all of the societies involved. The second reason for the frontier's failure to advance was closely related to the first. At the heart of the conflict between the Khoikhoi, the San and the colonists was competition for environmental resources. The most dogged resistance to colonial expansion took place along an important environmental frontier - imprecise and shifting though it was - between the winter and summer rainfall regions of the Cape. The intensity of the struggle along this environmental divide is an indication as to how vital it was, for both pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, to have access to the natural resources of both rainfall regions. But the inability of the *trekboers* to move beyond this contested boundary was not only due to Khoisan resistance. It was also related to the fact that, to the north and east of the interior escarpment, the annual rainfall was too low to permit successful pastoralism. It is no coincidence that pastoralist expansion into the interior of the northern Cape remained stalled along the dividing line between the winter and summer rainfall regions for over a hundred years; and it is no coincidence that when a northern boundary to the colony was finally proclaimed in 1798 it followed, in the north-west, roughly the same line.⁴

It is thus clear that the crisis of the 1770s and the subsequent interactions between the *trekboers*, the Khoikhoi and the San can only be understood in the context of the environment of the interior. It will be necessary to consider the resources of the various inland regions and to describe the strategies that were adopted by the various frontier societies to exploit these resources. Since pastoralism was the dominant economic activity within the frontier zone and the *trekboers* the dominant pastoralist society, it will be useful to stress those aspects of the interior environment which affected *trekboer* expansion.

3. See N. Penn, "Labour, land and livestock in the Western Cape during the eighteenth century: The Khoisan and the colonists", in W. James and M. Simons, (eds.), *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town, 1989), pp.9-19 for a discussion of the period.

4. P. J. van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.182.

4 It will also be necessary to describe how competition for the environmental resources began to influence the lives of the various peoples of the frontier zone. As the *trekboers* gained possession of more and more of the region's natural resources, the independence of both Khoikhoi and San societies was eroded. In a climate of increased Khoisan resistance, incessant commando activity and escalating violence the treatment of colonial servants, including "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots", deteriorated. The interplay of these processes is most clearly observed in a key episode which took place in the Roggeveld just before the launch of the General Commando of 1774 - a revolt of Khoikhoi labourers. This chapter closes with a detailed consideration of this revolt for it is, in many ways, the climactic moment of the various themes discussed.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The most significant features of the Cape interior - sometimes known as the Cape Thirstland - are its low rainfall and its paucity of perennial water. Nowhere does more than 250mm of rain fall per annum and drought is common.⁵ These factors help to account for the extremely rapid expansion of the colony after the war of 1739. Colonial pastoralists, or *trekboers*, were now free to advance beyond the Olifants River and the Bokkeveld Mountains but the pace and direction of their advance was largely determined by the availability of water and grazing. For these reasons they avoided a direct advance to the north or north-west as in these directions lay the parched and barren plain of the Kneegtsvlakte. Instead the *trekboers* moved in an easterly and north-easterly direction, reaching the Roggeveld Mountains of the interior escarpment early in the 1740s.⁶ The rapidity of this advance is to be ascribed to the fact that the grazing and water resources between the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld did not encourage permanent settlement. Between these mountain ranges lies the Onder Karoo, known by the early *trekboers* simply as the Karoo, and known today as the Ceres or Tanqua Karoo.⁷ As late as 1944 this arid expanse could only be used as temporary, seasonal trekveld by the farmers of the Bokkeveld and Roggeveld.⁸ The pastures of the area only became attractive to pastoralists after the winter rains and in early

5. See D.A. Findlay, "The San Of The Cape Thirstland And L. Anthing's 'Special Mission'" (B.A. Hons., University of Cape Town, 1977), chapter 1, for a survey of the environment of the Cape Thirstland.

6. On 25 May Louw Pretorius registered a farm "aan de Rogger valley genaamt het bockvelt" and in November 1746 Christiaan Godlieb Lievery (or Leevenbeg)(with the widow Geede Aard van der Walt) and Pieter Erns Cruger registered "Uijtkijk" and "de Vogel fontein" "Over de Doorn Rivier in 't Roggenland". CA, RLR 10, p. 197; CA, RLR 11, pp.134-135.

7. "Karoo" means dry, hard and sparsely covered in the Khoikhoi tongue whereas "Tanqua" or "Tankwa" probably derives from "Sanqua" or San, hence San Karoo. The Tanqua River flows (in winter) beneath the Roggeveld mountains and it may be that the district takes its name from the river. Nienaber and Raper, *Hottentotica*, A**, pp.663-664, 1017-1018.

8. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, pp.146-154.

spring, roughly between May and September. At other times the lack of water made it an inhospitable place with "neegens eenig punt of het kleinste plekje waarop het oog met welgevallen zou willen rusten".⁹

Despite the fact that the Onder Karoo could not be permanently occupied by the *trekboers* it was to become an essential area of land to those in both the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld. In the winter it was a far warmer area than the Bokkeveld and Roggeveld Mountains, where the temperatures were sometimes cold enough to kill livestock - especially lambs. It was therefore crucial that the farmers in the mountains were able to move their stock to the lower, warmer Onder Karoo. "Geen vee zou men in het Roggeveld zo min als in het Koude Bokkeveld kunnen houden, zonder het voorrecht van gedurende het winter saison gebruik te maken van de Carro,"¹⁰ declared the commission appointed to examine livestock and agricultural production in 1805. The winter trek to the Onder Karoo also gave the veld in the mountains a chance to recover and provided a change of grazing for the livestock, factors which were essential for the well being of the animals.

*As the century progressed it became customary for certain *trekboers* to regard particular places in the Onder Karoo as being theirs and they would return to these spots every year. Such a place was known as a "legplek" or "legplaats". No extra rent was charged for the *legplaats* and it was considered to be "attached" to the loan-farm of the claimant. It seems that the *legplaats* system began to be formalised towards the end of the eighteenth century and one may assume that this was in response to greater pressures on what had formerly been communal resources. But despite the increasing claims of individuals to enjoy exclusive rights to certain areas, the Onder Karoo remained a communal trekveld throughout the eighteenth century and served as a meeting place for Bokkevelders and Roggevelders who could exchange articles of produce, hunt and socialise together.¹¹

9. "no single point or the smallest place upon which the eye can rest with pleasure". The words are Lichtenstein's who travelled with Commissioner de Mist in the area in 1803. E.C. Godee-Molsbergen, (ed.), *Reizen in Zuid Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd*, Vol. 2 (The Hague, 1916-1933), p.186.

10. "No stock could be kept by people in the Roggeveld, and even less by those in the Koude Bokkeveld, did they not have the privilege of making use of the Karoo during the winter season". G.M. Theal, *Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten Over Zuid Afrika*, Vol. 3, (London, 1911), Notul of Dagverhaal Der Reis En Verrichtingen Van President En Gecommitteerde Leden Uit De Commissie Van Veeteelt En Landbouw In De Beide Roggevelten, Den Hantam, &c., p.354; Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.154.

11. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, pp.142-145; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.149-161; Theal, *Dokumenten*, Vol. 3, pp.324-370.

Some *trekboers* did not cross the Onder Karoo to the Roggeveld in the 1740s but ventured in a north-easterly direction to the Onder Bokkeveld. The Onder Bokkeveld is a plateau which lies at the northern end of the Bokkeveld Mountains between the Doorn and Hantam (sometimes known as the Karoo Doorn) Rivers. This area had been made safe for colonists in the war of 1739¹² but the intensity of fighting in the Onder Bokkeveld suggests that it was considerably more attractive to pastoralists than either the Kneegsvlakte on the plains below or the Onder Karoo. This was in fact the case since the rainfall, though less than that of regions to the south and west, was even sufficient to enable the early colonists to grow some wheat for their own consumption. The grazing too was excellent for cattle, sheep and horses.¹³ These factors contributed to the area becoming relatively over-populated at an early date and placed a strain on both the fertility of the soil and the grazing resources. In 1785 when Robert Gordon visited the Pakhuis Pass in the Onder Bokkeveld he remarked how: "In a derisory way this place is called Little Cape Town by the neighbours on account of the many small and wretched huts".¹⁴ Even before this increase in population however, the very first *trekboers* to enter the region were accustomed to trekking northwards in the summer, beyond the Langeberg and Kubiskow, to the southern parts of Bushmanland, then known as the Agterveld.¹⁵ In so doing they initiated the most characteristic seasonal trek in the north-western Cape - the trek from a winter rainfall region to a summer rainfall region.

Quite clearly it was not the *trekboers* who "discovered" the existence of the different rainfall regions, or the fact that it was beneficial to move from one area to another seasonally. Both the Khoikhoi and the San had been following the seasonal shifts in rainfall for centuries and it was they who, voluntarily or involuntarily, guided the *trekboers* into the most logical exploitation of the environment. As O.F. Mentzel put it: "The Hottentots are, as it were, the bloodhounds who smell out the most fertile lands".¹⁶

The boundary between the winter and summer rainfall regions is not a precise line but rather a shifting corridor in which there might be a little rainfall in both the winter and summer months. In any given year either winter or summer rainfall conditions might prevail within this corridor.¹⁷ It

12. See chapter 3 above.

13. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.191.

14. R. Gordon, 28 Dec. 1785, in Peter E. Raper and Maurice Boucher, (eds), *Robert Jacob Gordon: Cape Travels, 1777 To 1786*, 2 Vols (Johannesburg, 1988), Vol. 2, p.406.

15. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.192.

16. Mandelbrote, (ed.), *Mentzel*, Vol. 2, p.36.

17. J.H. Wellington, *Southern Africa: A Geographical Study*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1955), pp.245-247.

should be reiterated that the entire north-western Cape, whether in the winter or summer rainfall region, is an area of low rainfall. Before the invention of the windpump, and hence the availability of artesian water, it was essential for pastoralists to exploit the grazing and water resources of both regions. The best strategy for a pastoralist to adopt was therefore to occupy some point within or near the all-season rainfall corridor and then respond to seasonal shifts in rainfall by following the rain into the winter or summer rainfall regions. This was precisely the strategy adopted by the *trekboers* and, with some variation to meet local conditions, this seasonal movement became the basic rhythm of the northern frontier zone from 1740 onwards.

The all-season rainfall corridor coincides, roughly, with the line of the interior escarpment which runs from Namaqualand in the north-west, through the Hantam and Roggeveld Mountains, to the Nieuweveld mountains in the south-east. The mountains of the escarpment have the additional advantage of being better watered than their surroundings since they receive more rainfall and possess permanent springs. For these reasons the *trekboers* hastened to establish themselves at favourable points near to the mountains of the escarpment and within, or close to, the all season rainfall corridor. These regions, occupied by colonists between 1740 and 1770, constituted the northern frontier zone in the mid-eighteenth century and may be divided into the following districts: Namaqualand, the Onder Bokkeveld, the Hantam, the Roggeveld and the Nieuweveld.

Namaqualand was colonised somewhat later than the other districts and is the subject of a subsequent chapter.¹⁸ The Onder Bokkeveld, however, was probably the first area to be appropriated after the war of 1739. Indeed, the northern Doorn and Wiedouw Rivers had attracted European settlers from about 1732 though it is unlikely that settlement was extensive before the local Khoisan had been pacified.¹⁹ Some of the area's attractions have already been outlined. The summer trek from the Onder Bokkeveld to the Agterveld or southern Bushmanland was encouraged by the existence of several good, though brackish, springs between the Langberg, the Kubiskow and the non-perennial Krom River.²⁰ North of these points, however, there is no standing water though water can be found by digging pits in select places. After rain, which, if it falls, falls in the form of irregular thunder showers, the grazing in Bushmanland becomes outstanding and water collects in vleis or in pools in the normally dry river beds. In general the further north one travels the more difficult it is to find water. Since rain might fall in one place

18. See pp.281-288 below.

19. See p.138 above.

20. "Kubiskow" means "bleskops fonteinsberg" in the Hottentot. Nienaber and Raper, *Hottentotica*, A**, pp.791-792.

one year and in another place the next, the grazing and water resources of Bushmanland, like those of the entire summer rainfall area, are unpredictable.

These factors obliged the eighteenth century pastoralists who entered the area to be highly mobile and discouraged the growth of the *legplaats* system. Though some farms were allocated at the Kubiskow in 1760 there were large parts of Bushmanland that remained unallocated Crown land until the twentieth century. In October and November the grazing in the Onder Bokkeveld would deteriorate and water become scarce. A move to the summer rainfall area at such a time was essential. By April and May, however, the water of the summer rainfall area would begin to dry up and the *trekboers* would return to their farms in the Onder Bokkeveld to await the winter rains and graze their stock on the veld which, hopefully, had recovered from the previous year's grazing.²¹

To the north-east of the Onder Bokkeveld is a mountain which lies to the north-west of the Roggeveld: the Hantam.²² The Hantam is separated from the Roggeveld by a plain, receives more rain than its surroundings and possesses several good springs. For these reasons it was probably occupied by colonists as early as 1740 although the first loan-farm in the area - "Akerendam", site of the present day Calvinia - was granted in 1750.²³ The district was very good sheep country and the grazing was found to be quite exceptional for horses. It was discovered that horses which grazed on the mountain's slopes were immune to horse sickness.²⁴ Since horses were such a crucial component of the *trekboers*' economy and, along with firearms, the basis of the commandos' strength, no single farmer ever claimed a monopoly of grazing on the mountain's slopes. Those who owned farms around the base grazed a limited number of horses on the plateau in common every autumn.²⁵ By 1778 there were fourteen farms around the mountain.²⁶

21. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, pp. 190-194; also Van der Merwe, *Pioniers Van Die Dorland* (Cape Town, 1941).

22. The name is derived from the Hottentot word "heyutama" which describes the *Pelargonium bifolium*, which has an edible root. See Nienaber and Raper, *Hottentotica*, A**, pp.519-521.

23. C.G. Botha, *Place Names in the Cape Province* (Cape Town, 1927), p.109; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, p.4; CA, RLR 12, p.163.

24. Godee-Molsbergen, *Reizen*, Vol. 2, p.180, n.1.

25. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Briewe van Veldkornette en Private Persone, Landdrost to W.A. Nel of Hantam, 5 Nov. 1787. In March 1800 J.G. van Reenen wrote from the Hantam to state that, as far as he could remember, it had been decided in 1787 or 1788 by Governor Van de Graaf that nobody could graze on the Hantam Berg, either with horned stock or horses, except neighbouring farmers who could graze two or three horses in the worst part of the year, namely March to May. He hoped that the ruling could be found and proof sent because the farmers Jan van Wijk and Abel Pienaar had brought a herd of fifty horses to the mountain in November. CA, 1/STB 10/150, J.G. van Reenen to Landdrost, 22 March 1800.

26. R. Gordon, 28 Dec. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.212-3.

South-east of the Hantam was the Roggeveld or Roggeland.²⁷ The first recorded loan-farms in the area were registered in 1743 and by 1750 the number of registrations had risen to thirty-one.²⁸ Contemporaries divided the Roggeveld into different regions. The mountains lie on a north-west to south-east axis and the north-western parts were known as the Onder Roggeveld, separated from the Middle Roggeveld, to the south, by the Aape Berg. The south-eastern end of the range was known as the Klein Roggeveld.

The Onder Roggeveld was hard country; rocky and snake infested. The amaryllis, or goat-poison bulb, was fairly common and could cause the death of any animal which ate it.²⁹ Water was scarce and the district subject to terrible droughts. When Gordon visited the area for the second time in January 1786 he recorded that: "This countryside was so parched that no one had ever seen it like this. Most farmers were preparing to flee with their flocks to the country around the Riet and Sak Rivers which are in Bushmanland".³⁰ But these rivers were themselves non-perennial and hardly more than streams at the best of times.

The Roggeveld was not always as dry as it became. According to the Roggevelders of 1803, when colonists first entered the area there was a super-abundance of water:

Such that in the middle of summer the nearest neighbours could not get to each other, on account of the rivers being overflowed, and of the deep morasses in the valleys. There seldom at that time passed a week, even in the hottest months, that violent thunderstorms did not bring with them a profuse supply of rain: on the contrary, whole summers had of late years passed without the intervention of a single storm.³¹

From another source we learn that there were very heavy rains in the colony in 1746³² and it is quite likely that the entry of the *trekboers* into the Roggeveld coincided with a western oscillation

27. The most likely origin of the name "Roggeveld" is that the grass of the area looked like a kind of "rog" or "rye", probably the Wilde Rog (*Secale Africanum*). See V.S. Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1965), p.42. J.H. Cloete suggests that it is named after a Khoisan or "Bastaard-Hottentot" named Cupido Roggeveld who is mentioned in Wikar's journal as being a raider in the region but the use of the word "Roggeveld" or "Roggeland" in the loan-farm records predates Wikar's (1779) information. See J.H. Cloete, "Note on Roggeveld", *Africana Notes and News*, 1949, Vol. 6, p.52.

28. See note 7 above. See also CA, RLR 10, pp.167-170; CA, RLR 12, pp.38, 56, 68, 70, 72, 103, 110, 115, 128, 132, 148, 163.

29. R. Gordon, 25 Dec. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.210. Lichtenstein reported that the San prepared their arrows with poison from the horned snakes of the Onder Roggeveld. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.119.

30. R. Gordon, 2 Jan. 1786; also 31 Dec. 1785, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.409, 407: "Found this country frighteningly dry everywhere. For some years has had little rain and presently hardly a drop for six months".

31. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.123-124.

32. CA, LM 7, Leibbrandt's Precip Resolutions of the Council of Policy 1742-1760, 1 Feb. 1747.

of the summer rainfall boundary.³³ The good rainfall conditions of the 1740s might be another reason why there was reduced conflict within the frontier zone at this time.

Rainfall was not the only environmental resource of the interior to deteriorate after the entry of the *trekboers* into the region, for the vegetation too altered substantially between 1740 and 1800. According to Acock's map of the vegetation of South Africa in 1400³⁴ the vegetation of the Roggeveld escarpment was of a scrubby mixed grassveld type - eminently suitable for pastoralism. Today, however, the vegetation of the area is typical of the Karoo type, suitable for sheep but not for cattle. The process of deterioration did not go unremarked by the eighteenth century colonists³⁵ and the carrying capacity of the veld was greatly reduced by 1805.³⁶

It is quite clear that, from the outset, the escarpment was a somewhat delicate and marginal resource base for pastoralists. By itself it could not provide adequate grazing and water resources all the year round and in these circumstances stock-farmers had to be highly mobile. Each family of *trekboers* in the Onder Roggeveld had at least two farms and, in addition, like farmers throughout the Roggeveld, a *legplaats* in the Onder Karoo so that the freezing winters of the mountains could be avoided.³⁷ In the summer the Onder Roggevelders, together with the Hantamers and, if it was a dry year, the inhabitants of the Middle and Klein Roggeveld, would all trek to the north and east in search of thunder showers and the waters of the Sak and Riet Rivers.

The Middle Roggeveld was just south of the Onder Roggeveld whilst the Klein Roggeveld, or Komsberg, was to the south of the Middle Roggeveld, marking the point where the escarpment makes a right angle and follows a south-west to north-east axis. This axis was, and is, known as the Nieuweveld and was first entered by the *trekboers* in 1760.³⁸ The Middle and Klein

33. Wellington notes that on one occasion (the summer of 1900-1901) summer rainfall conditions spread to the west coast. Wellington, *Southern Africa*, Vol. 1, p.247.

34. J.P.H. Acocks, *Veld Types of South Africa*, Memoirs of the Botanical Survey of South Africa, no.40 (Pretoria, 1975), maps between pp.6-7.

35. "In many parts of the country here people complain that the growth of grass is greatly impeded by Rhinoceros Bush (*santilenea*). The seed is propagated by wind and even by it falling into the wool of sheep as they wander. When the colony first began these bushes were not so plentiful". R. Gordon, 14 Dec. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.205.

36. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.123.

37. R. Gordon, 20 Dec. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.208: "The inhabitants all travel to the Karoo in the winter on account of the cold. Piet Krieger stays but his stock goes. They take their possessions with them or bury them in the ground". Lichtenstein remarked that although there were forty-seven farms in the Onder Roggeveld there were no more than twenty-two householders. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.124.

38. The first time the Nieuweveld was mentioned in the loan-farm records was in 1762 when Willem Steenkamp registered "Matjeskuijl geleegen agter 't Roggeveld in 't Nieuwland". CA, RLR 16, 26 Jan. 1762, p.225. Gordon

Roggeveld had substantially the same characteristics as the Onder Roggeveld though they were better provided with water, having the Vis, Renoster and Riet Rivers (all non-perennial) flowing to the east of the escarpment. Consequently the farmers of this part of the Roggeveld were only obliged to undertake a summer trek beyond the Sak River in exceptionally dry years.³⁹ For the rest of the time they would trek only as far as their *legplaatsen* at the Vis, Renoster and Riet Rivers.

The Nieuweveld was never successfully occupied by the *trekboers* during the eighteenth century for two major and related reasons: its natural environment and the intense Khoisan resistance which occurred here. The resistance will be discussed in greater detail below⁴⁰ but the climatic and geographical features of the area can be dealt with here. Unlike the Roggeveld the Nieuweveld is predominantly a summer rainfall region though, like the rest of the Cape interior, this rainfall is low (12-25 cm. per annum).⁴¹ P.J. van der Merwe did not think that the Nieuweveld and the area at the base of its escarpment, the Koup, was environmentally any worse than the rest of the escarpment⁴² though the meaning of the word "Koup" might cause one to imagine otherwise.⁴³ The actual mountains themselves were scarcely more prepossessing than the dusty plains beneath them and farms throughout the area were frequently abandoned, not so much because of Khoisan hostility but because of drought and poor grazing.⁴⁴ In 1776, for instance, it was not found necessary to appoint a *veldkorporaal* for the Koup as the entire district had been abandoned due to drought and the lack of grazing.⁴⁵ Quite apart from the desiccating droughts was the fact that colonists could only dwell in the Koup and Nieuweveld mountains if the Khoisan could be evicted from the area. This was never wholly accomplished in the eighteenth century because the adverse environmental conditions prevented the *trekboers* from establishing

states that the San of the Sneeuwberg knew the Nieuweveld as "a'nou" though what this means is not stated. R. Gordon, 12 Nov. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, p.194.

39. Van der Merwe, *Trek*, pp.198-199.

40. See chapter 6 below.

41. Wellington, *South Africa*, Vol. 1, p.241.

42. Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, pp.117-115.

43. The "Koup" was also known as "De Coup" or "Gouph" and the most likely meaning of its names were "open plain", "skeleton country", "stink gat" or "poephof". See J.A. Engelbrecht, *The Korana* (Cape Town, 1936), p.15; Botha, *Place Names*, pp.35 and 54; Nienaber and Raper, *Hottentotica*, A**, pp.773-776.

44. Gordon described the area as being very stony Karoo and noted that there were said to be many lions in the district. Travellers and commandos in the Koup frequently mentioned the abandoned farms of the area. R. Gordon, 3, 4, 5 Nov. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.190-192.

45. CA, C 655, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein 1771-1779, 5 Nov. 1776. The district was abandoned until July 1779 on this occasion. See also Moodie, *The Record*, Part 3, pp.60 and 81

themselves there as a permanent presence. Realising this, Khoisan resisters tended to use the area as a place of refuge, thereby enhancing the discomfort of the region's frontier farmers.⁴⁶

It was not possible for *trekboers* to base themselves in the Nieuweveld Mountains, as they had based themselves in the Roggeveld, and undertake a seasonal trek from one rainfall region to another. The Nieuweveld *trekboers* could only trek into the adjacent winter rainfall area of the Roggeveld, which was already occupied by other colonists and a marginal resource area in its own right.⁴⁷ It is true that there was summer grazing north of the Nieuweveld, if the rains had been good, but this water and grazing were used by the *trekboers* of the Roggeveld and Hantam during the summer and the area was thus regarded as seasonal trekveld which could not be permanently appropriated as someone else's *legplaats*. This area was known by a number of names in the eighteenth century: the Sak River, the Kareeberge, the Agter Nieuweveld or the Agter Roggeveld.

From the above survey it should be clear that pastoralist societies of the Cape interior needed to ensure seasonal entry into the summer rainfall regions north and east of the Roggeveld. Without access to these regions possession of the escarpment would not have been sufficient. But neither the escarpment nor the Cape interior were devoid of Khoisan inhabitants before the arrival of the *trekboers* and it is time to consider the situation of the indigenous inhabitants of the region on the eve of the colonial invasion.

THE KHOISAN OF THE CAPE INTERIOR

It should be admitted at the outset that information concerning the Khoisan of the interior is extremely scarce, even after 1740. Few visitors were attracted to the region during the eighteenth century and even fewer bothered to record their observations. Those men who would later describe the activities of their commandos, in the form of reports to the *landdrost*, were not so much concerned with recording details of the social life of the Khoisan as they were with providing a simple score sheet of people killed per day. During the nineteenth century Dr. Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, succeeded in recording a great deal of information regarding the language and folklore of the /Xam, the San who lived in the vicinity of

46. See chapter 6 below.

47. The records after 1780 bear witness to the deterioration of the resources of the escarpment whilst litigation and conflict over farm boundaries increased. See Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.132-133. See also chapter 11 below.

present day Calvinia and Kenhardt.⁴⁸ This information, however, contains little that illuminates inter-group relations in the eighteenth century or earlier. Present archaeological research has not yet focused on the crucial area of the escarpment but has, instead, concentrated on areas closer to the Orange River.⁴⁹ The result is that our knowledge of the history and pre-history of the Khoisan of the interior remains sketchy and conjectural.

We may assume, however, that just as in other areas of the Cape, Khoikhoi pastoralists had been more recent, intrusive arrivals amongst aboriginal San societies. We may also assume that contact between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers in the interior had been of shorter duration than similar contact along the coast or the Orange River. This was due to environmental circumstances since the interior, being more arid than elsewhere, was initially skirted by the Khoikhoi pastoralists. Such archaeological evidence as we do have, suggests that the dispersal of Khoikhoi pastoralists along the Orange River took place about 500 years A. D. and had the effect of displacing some riverine hunter-gatherer groups southwards into Bushmanland.⁵⁰ Khoikhoi groups probably settled in the Roggeveld a lot later than this, though exactly when they did so is hard to say. Evidence collected in the area in 1809 is quite specific about the fact that the Khoikhoi were present along the escarpment before the colonists arrived:

The supposition that the enmity of the Bosjesmen was originally occasioned by their resentment at being forced by the colonists to quit the territory of their ancestors, seems unfounded, as it appears that they have always resided in the country they now inhabit since the Cape has been possessed by Europeans. In the course of my journey I have seen several persons who remember the events of more than half a century. They relate that the colonists began to settle in this part of the country some sixty years ago, when they found it inhabited by Hottentots, who readily entered their service. The Bosjesmen resided at that time beyond the

48. The material they collected is housed in the Bleek-Lloyd Archives (B.C. 151) in the Manuscripts Collection of the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town. I thank Pippa Skotnes for making her typed transcriptions of the documents available to me. See also the contributions in P. Skotnes, (ed.), *Sound From The Thinking Strings* (Cape Town, 1991) and the proceeds of the Bleek-Lloyd Conference held at the Alphen Hotel, Cape Town in September 1991. For published selections of the material in the Bleek-Lloyd archives see W.H.I. Bleek, *Report of Doctor Bleek concerning his researches into the Bushman language and customs, presented to the Honourable House of Assembly by command of his Excellency the Governor* (Cape Town, 1873 and 1875); L.C. Lloyd, *A Short Account of further Bushmen material collected* (London, 1889) and W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd, *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (London, 1911).

49. See for instance A.J.B. Humphreys and A.I. Thackeray, *Ghaap and Gariep: Later Stone Age Studies in the Northern Cape* (Cape Town, 1983) and A.B. Smith, (ed.), *Einiqualand: The Khoisan of the Orange River Frontier* (Cape Town, in press).

50. Humphreys and Thackeray, *Ghaap and Gariep*, p.294; C. Elret, "The First Spread of Food Production to Southern Africa", in C. Elret and Merrick Posnansky (eds.), *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 158-181; A.B. Smith, "Competition, Conflict and Clientship: Khoi and San Relationships in the Western Cape", unpublished paper, University of Cape Town, 1985, pp.11-12.

Zak River, with the exception of a few kraals that lived a little on this side of it, for the convenience of exchanging skins for the tobacco of the Hottentots, who procured that article from the colonists in the Bokkeveld, south of the Karoo.⁵¹

This report emphasises that although the San were not the dominant group in the Roggeveld they were not totally excluded from it and, in fact, enjoyed relations of exchange with the Khoikhoi. Significantly, even at this early stage, the San had acquired a taste for tobacco. The semi-nomadic life style which both societies were obliged to adopt doubtless contributed to the fact that the geographical boundary lines were not clearly drawn and that there was a measure of overlap between them. The broad patterns of land occupancy are, however, quite clear. There were Khoikhoi in the Roggeveld, before 1740, and the majority of the San lived over the Sak River.

The situation in the area north of the Bokkeveld and west of the Roggeveld (i.e. the Onder Bokkeveld-Hantam region) is not so straightforward. Interaction between Khoikhoi and San groups was probably as complex here as that which occurred in areas to the south and west where pastoralism had been introduced at an early date. The area had suffered the disruptive effects of the heavy fighting of 1739 and this contributed to the destabilization of local Khoisan groups. Even in the confused setting of the 1740s, however, there were clear distinctions to be made between Khoikhoi and San. In 1741 it was recorded how the "Hottentots Capitaine gent. Keyser, van die Bosjesmans Natie", whose kraal was in the Bokkeveld, had killed the "Chirigriqua's Hottentot" Claas Hannibal of the Verlore Vlei and stolen twenty of the Chirigriqua's cattle.⁵² This incident highlights a number of interesting facts. The first is that the fight occurred because one of the Chirigriqua, Spring in 't Veld, had stolen the wife of Keyser - an example, if one is needed, that sexual relations between Khoikhoi and San did occur. A second notable fact is that the woman in question, Patrys, had been helping to take in the harvest at the farm of Hendrik Krugel at the time of her abduction - an example that some of the Bokkeveld San were prepared to work for the colonists. A third point of interest is that the Company was approached by the Chirigriqua to act as arbitrator and dispenser of justice in the case - an indication that the local Khoisan had surrendered their autonomy. The Company decided not to take action against Keyser for murder and robbery because "if Keyser be touched or punished for the crime, the other Bushman Captains who are his friends would endeavour to avenge themselves on the Europeans, it being a wild and savage nation, who have at all times made it their habit to rob and steal"; and because "Keyser has always been a faithful protector of the

51. Moodie, *The Record*, Part 5, p.34.

52. G.C. de Wet, (ed.), *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, Vol. 10, 1740-1743, 19 June 1741, pp.125-127.

Europeans, even against his own nation".⁵³ The Chirigiqua were, by contrast, considered to be too feeble to make a nuisance of themselves.

Many, but not all, of the Bokkeveld Khoisan had doubtless fled the area, both to avoid the carnage of 1739 and because they did not relish seeing their land taken by colonists or the Company acting as the area's ultimate authority. Some ended up in Bushmanland and it is tempting to conclude that Bushmanland must therefore have served as a refuge area for San who had been forced from other areas by Khoikhoi pastoralists long before the Europeans arrived. To some extent this is true, but the situation was more complex than this. The Cape Thirstland was more than just a refuge area since it had always possessed resources of game and plant food abundant enough to support hunter-gatherer groups. There is sufficient evidence to state that the San of the Cape interior were not simply recent and unwilling occupants of an undesirable locality. They were, on the contrary, practised exploiters of, what was to them, a bountiful environment.⁵⁴ So long as the pastoralists of the escarpment did not intrude too radically into their domain, or prevent them from following the seasonal movement of wild animals, there was no reason why they should be unduly discontented.

In support of this contention it is necessary to examine the relationships which existed between the /Xam and other Khoisan groups more closely. In particular it is necessary to challenge Elphick's view that in the Cape interior:

The pastoral Khoi and their coloured descendants were recent immigrants and were engaged in bitter warfare with hunter-gatherers who undoubtedly spoke languages quite unlike their own, lived by different norms and seemed quite irreconcilable to the presence of newcomers.⁵⁵

To begin with it should be noted that the term /Xam was primarily used as a linguistic, rather than an ethnic description. Bleek used it to describe the language of his San informants, who came from the Calvinia and Kenhardt districts of the Cape interior. This language was probably very similar to the language spoken by the San of the Roggeveld and Westphal has identified it as belonging to the same group of Bush languages that he classifies as Bush "c", a dialect of which

53. Ibid. The translation is that of Leibbrandt from CA, LM 49, Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 1713-1742, pp.68-69. See also CA, 1/STB 3/9, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interrogatorien (Krimineel), Relas van den Hottentots Capitaine Keyser, 23 May 1741.

54. See J. Parkinson, "Xabbo's father's father's place it was: Perceptions of /Xam hunter-gatherers", in P. Skotnes, (ed.), *Sound From The Thinking Strings*.

55. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.5.

is spoken today (or was until recently) in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park. This would correspond to Dorothea Bleek's "Southern Bush" group of languages and Elphick has provisionally identified the languages spoken by the Sneeuwberg San, the so-called "Chinese Bushmen" or Swy ci, as belonging to this group as well.⁵⁶ It therefore seems that there was a similar Bush language which stretched from the north-western Cape interior to the eastern Cape interior. It would be reasonable to expect that contiguous groups within this "Southern Bush" language group could understand each other, their dialect differing according to their distance from one another.⁵⁷ How well could the Khoikhoi understand "Southern Bush" dialects?

Though there was a linguistic distinction between Khoikhoi and San this should not be exaggerated or extrapolated, to suggest that the two groups lived in mutually unintelligible and irreconcilable hostility. Elphick argues that the languages spoken by the hunters were diverse, distinct and localised, differing from one group of hunters to another and, by implication, largely unintelligible to the Khoikhoi. In support of this proposition he quotes Lichtenstein's remark that "No Hottentot understands a word of the Bushman language". This observation, made in the Roggeveld in 1803, was, Elphick believes, equally true of the Khoikhoi and San of the Sneeuwberg.⁵⁸ We should note, however, that on this matter, judging from accompanying remarks,⁵⁹ Lichtenstein was a highly unqualified commentator, and that another traveller had a very different opinion. When Robert Gordon visited the area between the Hantam and the Bokkeveld in 1779 he noted that "Chief Schoneveld (or Doeroep)", a "Bushman Chief" of the Eiquaas or Grassveld San (who lived at the Kubiskow Mountains), spoke "very well".⁶⁰ This implies that, whether the language spoken was Khoikhoi or Dutch, there was no communication problem. A "Bushman girl" encountered between the Hantam and the Roggeveld was perfectly

56. E.O.J. Westphal, "The Linguistic Prehistory of Southern Africa Bush, Kwadi, Hottentot, and Bantu Linguistic Relationships", *Africa*, 33, no.3, July 1963, pp.256 and 244; R. Elphick, "The Cape Khoi and the First Phase of South African Race Relations", (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1972), pp.68-69; R. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.29-30.

57. As Gordon suggested when he visited the vicinity of the Sneeuwberg in 1777. See R. Gordon, 16 Dec. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.114.

58. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.29-30.

59. Lichtenstein based this observation on his experience of meeting two "Bushmen" in the Klein Roggeveld in 1803. His remarks ought to be seen in the context of some of his other observations wherein he doubts "if the terms language and customs can be applied to people upon the very lowest step in the order of civilisation, as the Bushmen may certainly be esteemed: one might almost call this extraordinary race without customs and without language". Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.143. One wonders how much attention ought to be paid to the linguistic observations of such an expert who believed, moreover, that the San "have no names" (*ibid.*, p.148). He noted, however, that some of the colonists spoke the "Bosjesmans" language (*ibid.*, p.127) and that the "Bosjesmans" he met could speak some words of Dutch. [The fact that the expression "Groot Baas" featured prominently is revealing (*ibid.*, pp.146-147)]. It is therefore most surprising that he could claim that no Khoikhoi could understand a word of the "Bushman" language.

60. R. Gordon, 2 Jan. and 4 Jan. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.214-6.

understood by Gordon's Boland Khoikhoi servant, Koerikei.⁶¹ It would seem, therefore, that the Khoikhoi and San west of the Roggeveld could understand each other, a fact which indicates that a significant period of interaction had occurred between them. Gordon also noted similar instances of mutual intelligibility between the Khoikhoi and San societies of the Orange River,⁶² whilst in the eastern Cape both Gordon and Sparrman (another eighteenth century traveller) recorded that, despite certain difficulties, the Khoikhoi who were with them could understand the "Chinese Bushmen" of the Sneeu Berg.⁶³

Where there was linguistic interaction there was also social and economic interaction, not all of which, obviously, was hostile. This does not mean, however, that the differences between Khoikhoi and San were not considerable; nor that the San were a sub-species of failed pastoralists or the Khoikhoi were simply stock-keeping San. It is true that, as the process of colonisation stripped more and more Khoikhoi of their livestock, they came to resemble San, particularly in the eyes of the colonists who, in any event, tended to regard the San as a type of Khoikhoi (as is revealed by their name for the San: "Bosjesmans-Hottentotte"). But notwithstanding a substantial body of scholarly work which seeks to demonstrate that the San were, in effect, livestock-less Khoikhoi or a Khoikhoi underclass,⁶⁴ there is too much evidence to the contrary. The culture and consciousness of the /Xam language speakers, clearly revealed in the Bleek-Lloyd material, is not that of a pastoralist society.⁶⁵ The hunter-gatherers of the Cape Thirstland were highly specialised societies which had been occupying a particular niche in a particular environment for a long time. The San also had a strong sense of group identity, closely linked to territoriality which, in their own minds, separated them not only from the Khoikhoi but from other groups of San as well.⁶⁶ Even within Bushmanland Bleek's informants made a distinction between "Flat Bushmen" (or "Plain Bushmen"), "Grass Bushmen", "Mountain Bushmen" and "Hardast Bushmen".⁶⁷ There were also clear distinctions between the /Xam (if we

61. R. Gordon, 28 Dec. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.212.

62. R. Gordon, 20 Aug. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.272.

63. "They speak Hottentot but their dialect as well as many words, though pronounced with clicks, differs from the others, so that they do not understand each other much." R. Gordon, 15 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.83. The point to stress here, surely, is the amount understood rather than the amount misunderstood between Boland Khoikhoi and Sneeu Berg San.

64. See for instance Carmel Schrire, "Identity of San" and Edwin Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*.

65. This is a point made very strongly by those who have worked most intimately with the Bleek-Lloyd material. See for instance J.D. Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (London, 1981), and R.L. Hewitt, *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the southern San* (Hamburg, 1986).

66. J. Deacon, "My place is Bitterpits", *African Studies*, 45, 2, 1986.

67. This is clear throughout the narratives of the /Xam in the Bleek-Lloyd Archives.

may call them thus) and the Swy ei of the Sneeu-berg in language, appearance, adornment, weaponry and the style of their art.⁶⁸

A comparative study of the rock art of the Sneeu-berg and the rock art of the Thirstland has led J. and I. Rudner to state that: "the theory that the painters from the east and south were driven into the Thirstland is not supported by the type of paintings found there. It rather seems that the painters in the Karoo, although belonging to the same cultural group as the painters in the east, had little contact with them".⁶⁹ Despite this diversity amongst San groups they were, none the less, more like each other than they were like the Khoikhoi. There is a great deal of common subject matter in the rock art of the interior and the rock art of the Sneeu-berg - the eland, for instance, is a favourite subject in both areas. Lewis-Williams has identified strong convergences between the rock art of the southern San, the folklore collected by Wilhelm Bleek from the /Xam and the ethnographic data collected from present day !Kung to the north. All of this suggests a fair degree of uniformity and a common cognitive culture amongst the San of the interior.⁷⁰ How then does one account for the Rudner's claim that there was little contact between the Swy ei and the /Xam?

The most likely explanation is that there was a significant environmental divide between the two groups. Whilst it was feasible for groups to base themselves near to the all-season rainfall corridor in the Roggeveld, once they settled too far to the east, access to the winter rainfall area became impracticable. If, however, groups were so far to the east that they fell completely within a relatively well-watered summer rainfall area there would be no necessity to trek into a winter rainfall area. The Sneeu-berg was such an area, for groups could always escape a drought by trekking northwards to the Orange River or eastwards, (provided the southern Nguni would allow this) deeper into the better watered territories beyond the Sunday River. Between the Sneeu-berg and the Roggeveld, lay an area of low summer rainfall, the Nieuweveld, that was suitable to neither pastoralists nor hunter-gatherers as a focal point for seasonal cycles of movement. The arid country to the north and south of the Nieuweveld therefore served as an environmental frontier which, to an extent, kept the /Xam and the Swy ei apart and distinct. It was this thinly

68. See for instance letter of H. Cloete to Swellengrebel, 27 Feb. 1779, in G.J. Schutte, (ed.) *Briefwisseling Van Hendrik Swellengrebel Jr Oor Kaapse Sake 1778-1792* (Cape Town, 1982), pp.312-313. Cloete explained that there were "many different kinds of Hottentots ... and several kinds of Bushmen". The Sneeu-berg San, for instance, used smaller bows and arrows than those in the Bokkeveld and the Kamiesberg and wore sticks through their noses.

69. J. and I. Rudner, "Rock-art in the Thirstland Areas", *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, no.23, 1968, p.87.

70. Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, p.36. T. Dowson's *Rock-Engravings of the Northern Cape Interior* (Johannesburg, 1992), makes the same point.

populated corridor that later proved to be the path of least resistance into the interior for many fugitive Khoikhoi groups from the southern Cape as they fled before the advancing colonists.⁷¹ The impact of these migrants on the /Xam and the Khoikhoi of the Roggeveld was probably minimal as they were unlikely to have tried to establish themselves in the escarpment. The real danger to the Khoisan of the interior came from the west as the *trekboers* began to enter the Roggeveld. It is this process that we should now consider.

THE TREKBOERS AND THE ROGGEVELD KHOISAN

Although the *trekboer* presence in the Roggeveld was initially very limited, its impact on the local Khoisan was as destructive as the processes of colonisation had been in the south-western Cape. At first, however, this was not readily apparent. With an expanding population and an expanding frontier the first priority facing the *trekboers* was to accumulate sufficient stock, and sufficient land, to enable themselves and their sons to secure the basic minimum of pastoral self-sufficiency.⁷² But the process of accumulation was slow between 1740 and 1770, both because of the relative weakness of the sparse *trekboer* population in a vast, hostile environment and because of the relative poverty of the Khoikhoi of the interior. There could be no dramatic raids on Khoikhoi livestock in the vicinity of the escarpment simply because the Khoikhoi of this region did not possess very much livestock.

The *opgaafrollen* (tax records) of the colonists indicate that there was actually a decline in the number of cattle and sheep in colonial hands in the late 1740s.⁷³ The critical shortage of livestock which both the colonists and the VOC had experienced during the years 1714-1728 had been temporarily alleviated by the massive confiscation of Khoikhoi cattle following the war of 1739⁷⁴ but there was to be no such windfall after 1740. The decline in the livestock holdings of the colonists might have been attributable to under-recording in the *opgaafrollen*,⁷⁵ or to the heavy rains of 1746 which caused a great loss of livestock throughout the colony.⁷⁶ A more likely explanation, however, is that the *trekboers* really were finding it difficult to accumulate stock in

71. See chapter 8 below for a discussion of the Korana migration.

72. See N. Penn, "Pastoralists and Pastoralism" for a discussion of the dynamics of the *trekboer* pastoralist economy.

73. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape*, pp.59-61.

74. See p.135 above.

75. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape*, p.59.

76. CA, LM 7, 1 Feb. 1747.

the Cape interior. It is revealing that real growth in the numbers of livestock only began after 1770 when the *trekboers* entered the better watered areas of the eastern Cape.⁷⁷

Stock farming in the interior was indeed a more demanding activity - with fewer returns - than stock farming elsewhere in the Cape. In the harsh and unfamiliar world of the Roggeveld it was, initially, far more important for the colonists to try to attract Khoikhoi labourers to their side than to attempt to displace them completely. Their knowledge of local conditions and their skills in maintaining pastoral production in an arid environment, quite different from that of the south-western Cape, made the Khoikhoi indispensable. We should, therefore, envisage the colonial penetration of the Roggeveld as being achieved by a process of gradual infiltration rather than by shock tactics. This does not mean that the Khoikhoi did not find their livestock being taken from them by the characteristically colonial methods of force, fraud and unequal exchange. There were, of course, some colonists who robbed or defrauded the frontier Khoikhoi. But, as the evidence will reveal, there were a significant number of Roggeveld *trekboers* who sought to exercise a paternalistic protection over their Khoikhoi labourers and who tried to prevent even the VOC from taking the cattle of the local Khoikhoi.

Significantly, the first recorded instance of overt resistance to the *trekboer* presence in the Roggeveld came from the San and not from the Khoikhoi. In 1748 a certain Johannes Louw proposed that a man should be excused from military duty at the Cape in order to keep a watchful eye on the "Bosjesmans" of the "Roggeland".⁷⁸ There was obviously trouble brewing and in May 1754 the *Landdrost* and *Heemraaden* of Stellenbosch were informed that the *trekboers* who lived north of the Doorn River and in the Voorste and Agterste Roggeveld were, and had been for some time, subject to the robbery of their livestock by people described as roving "Bosjesmans" or "Bosjesmans-Hottentots". Half of Roelof van Wijk's flocks and herds had been stolen in the Agterste Roggeveld and a Khoikhoi herder had been murdered. The attackers had also threatened to burn down the houses of the colonists. On receipt of this news the authorities hastily appointed *veldkorporaals* in the troubled areas and instructed them to organise a commando. As a further precaution the *veldkorporaals* of the Olifants River and Vier en Twintig Rivieren were ordered to assist the colonists of the Roggeveld in every possible way. This, however, they did not do.⁷⁹

77. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape*, p.63.

78. CA, 1/STB 13/5, Krygsraad Resolutien, 16 Jan. 1748.

79. CA, 1/STB 13/6, Notule van Krygsraad, 20 May 1754; CA, C 654, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1751-1759, 28 May 1754.

Just as in 1739, those colonists who were not directly threatened by Khoisan resistance were extremely reluctant to exert themselves for their more distant brethren or, for that matter, for the Company. Barend Lubbe and Barend Vorster, the *veldkorporaals* in question, did not send a single man from their districts on the commando. In their defence they explained that they had not been supplied with sufficient ammunition, an oversight for which they were ultimately responsible and for which they were severely reprimanded.⁸⁰ Despite the non-participation of any colonists from west of the Bokkeveld the Roggeveld commando was able to submit a successful report by November.

The commando had encountered four different kraals and experienced resistance from each of them. In response to the poisoned arrows directed against them the commando members had killed sixty-four San. All but seven of the stolen animals were recovered and only three of the commando - one colonist and two Khoikhoi - had been wounded. One of the kraals had, however, successfully defended itself against the commando for it had been well protected behind rocks. The commando had tried all day, without success, to overcome the resisters and was forced to retire in the evening to the taunts of the defenders who shouted: " dat ziy hun vee nergens soudén kunnen verbergen of sij soudén het wel weeten te krijgen".⁸¹

It was also reported that not long before this an entire herd of cattle had been stolen from the farm of Jacobus Gildenhuys between the Roggeveld and the Bokkeveld. Three of the local farmers, with twenty of the local Khoikhoi in support, followed the thieves and managed to kill thirty-four of them, recovering most of the cattle at the same time. The survivors of this band of robbers said that they would make peace but only if a kraal of San whom they called the "Duikerpens" were subjugated. The *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch therefore resolved to try to deal with the Duikerpens.⁸² The commando despatched on this mission was successful in finding the Duikerpens, as well as some other kraals in the vicinity, and made peace with them. Three San captains were given gifts of sheep and a Company staff of office. It is not clear where these

80. CA, 1/STB 13/6, 19 Nov. 1754; CA C 654, 19 Nov. 1754. Lubbe was replaced as *veldkorporaal* because of his age in 1759. See CA, 1/STB 13/7, Notule van Krygsraad, 13 Feb. 1759.

81. "That they would not be able to hide their stock anywhere that they could not find it". CA, C 654, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1751-1759, 19 Nov. 1754. Also CA, C 490, Letters Received by Council of Policy, 1754, 20 Nov. 1754.

82. Ibid.

actions took place though it was reported that two other kraals lay further to the east. One of these was persuaded to make peace but the other could not be found.⁸³

The first complaints to reach the authorities concerning the theft of Khoikhoi cattle by colonists occurred in February 1750 when Oubaas, a Khoikhoi captain of the Roggeveld, reported how his kraal had twice been visited by the farmer Godlieb Rudolf Opperman. On both occasions Opperman had taken two oxen from Oubaas in exchange for, firstly, two old cows and secondly, a young heifer. At a later date Opperman had driven off all Oubaas's cattle and kept six of them after making a token and unwanted payment.⁸⁴

It seems, however, that Company servants in search of livestock were a far greater menace to the Khoikhoi than the *trekboers*. Another incident recorded in 1750 illustrates not only that the Khoikhoi were used to being visited by Company officials but also that the name of the VOC was capable of inspiring an awesome respect amongst the vulnerable indigenes of the frontier zone. In 1749 the farmer Johannes de Beer, his *knecht* Jan Martens and their Khoikhoi servants visited the Klein Roggeveld. Martens, splendidly attired in a hat with a silver tress and with a pistol strapped to his side, announced to the local Khoikhoi that he was a corporal of the Company engaged in bartering for livestock. Using the authority of his borrowed office Martens succeeded in obtaining eight cattle and thirty-eight sheep from the Khoikhoi captain Jurgen, promising the latter that he would be rewarded with a Company staff. Using a similar story De Beer and Martens obtained twelve cattle and thirty-four wethers from the Khoikhoi captain Hermanus. In both cases the proffered payment took the form of some glass beads and tobacco, clearly unsatisfactory in the eyes of the Khoikhoi since, on discovering that Martens had duped them, they protested to the authorities.⁸⁵

Their protests were no doubt encouraged by the genuine Company corporal, Frederick Sigmond Modeman, who, journeying to the Roggeveld from the Company post at Rietvallei at the Buffelsjagts River, discovered that De Beer and Martens had pre-empted the Company in its

83. CA, C 491, Letters Received by Council of Policy, 1755, 3 April 1755. Perhaps one of the peace-makers was Captain Vredevelt (or Groinam) whom Gordon noted was the chief of the Camnaga, or Hartebeest River people in 1779. R. Gordon, 2 Jan. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.214.

84. CA, 1/STB 3/10, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interrogatorien (Krimineel) 1749-1758, Relas van Hottentot Capitain Oubaas, 21 Feb. 1750. Opperman was made *veldkorporaal* of the Voorste Roggeveld in 1753. CA, 1/STB 13/6, Notule van Krygsraad, 1750-1759, 16 Nov. 1753. He trekked from the Roggeveld in 1757 CA, C 654, 15 Oct. 1757 just before an official enquiry into his activities was initiated. CA, LM 7, 13 Dec. 1757.

85. CA, 1/STB 3/10, Relas van Hottentot Ontong, 21 Feb. 1750; Relas van Hottentot Jantje, 21 Feb. 1750; Relas van Hottentot Maurits, 21 Feb. 1750.

search for livestock. Modeman informed his superiors that the Roggeveld Khoikhoi had little or no cattle and that Opperman, De Beer and Martens were not the only colonists guilty of robbing the Khoikhoi.⁸⁶

Despite the above incidents we should not assume that the Khoikhoi were nothing but innocent victims of colonial duplicity. There had been Khoikhoi participation in the commandos of 1754 and 1755 and it is clear that there was a great deal of Khoikhoi co-operation with *trekboers* in the field of pastoral production. We are given an outstanding glimpse into the nature of the relationship which existed between the two groups in the 1760s, thanks to the uproar that was caused by the new corporal of the Company's post at the Buffelsjagts River, Hendrik Veldsman, when he came to obtain cattle and sheep for the Company from the Roggeveld Khoikhoi in 1768.

There were no bogus Company corporals to precede him but, unfortunately for the Roggeveld Khoikhoi, Veldsman was far more efficient at extracting livestock from them than any of the *trekboers* had been. He made his first appearance in the Roggeveld, beyond the Vis River, in December 1768. Here he encountered the Khoikhoi drovers, Roman and Barend, who were looking after the stock of the farmer Frans Campher whilst their own stock grazed on the farm of Albert Venter. From these few details we can learn a great deal about farming in the Roggeveld, for they reveal that the *trekboers* had already obtained *legplaatsen* in the summer rainfall region; that there was communal sharing of farms and Khoikhoi labour; and that the Khoikhoi still had livestock of their own which they were allowed to keep on white-owned farms. Roman and Barend had eight cattle plus a cow and a calf. Veldsman commanded them to bring him their livestock, threatening them with blows to ensure their compliance. When they had done so he gave them, though they did not want to trade, a flask of arrack, three strings of copper beads and half a span of tobacco (which proved to be unfit to smoke) per beast. The cow and the calf he took without payment.⁸⁷

Veldsman next went to the farm of Roelof van Wijk at Lceuwe Drift on the Vis River in the Roggeveld. By this stage he had managed to acquire 200 cattle and as many sheep. There were at least five Khoikhoi servants and a *knecht* in his entourage, as well as three wagons of cheap trade goods. Such a visitor must have been an unwelcome sight to a Roggeveld farmer in midsummer when water was scarce but Van Wijk had little option but to allow Veldsman's stock to devour

86. CA, 1/STB 3/10, Relas van Frederick Sigmond Modeman, 21 Feb. 1750; CA, LM 7, 13 Dec. 1757.

87. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interogatorien (Krimineel) 1759-1782, Relas van Hottentot Roman; Relas van Hottentot Barend, 26 Oct. 1769.

his pasturage whilst Veldsman tried to persuade the local Khoikhoi to part with their livestock. There were at least five Khoikhoi who worked for Van Wijk and he asked Veldsman to deal fairly with them. Veldsman assured him that he would and accompanied the Khoikhoi to Van Wijk's other farm where they kept their cattle. It would seem from this detail that at this stage the *trekboers* and the Khoikhoi kept their livestock separate from one another on different farms. In this way it was possible for a *trekboer* to control, by virtue of his servants' occupancy of the land, larger areas of the region's resources, and, when necessary, he could move his livestock from one farm to another. It would also seem as though the Khoikhoi were not, as yet, completely subjugated as servants, for although the *trekboers* claimed the land, the Khoikhoi could use it for their private flocks and herds. For paltry quantities of arrack, beads and tobacco Veldsman was, however, able to reduce the private flock of Van Wijk's Khoikhoi servants by twenty-four sheep and their private herd by eighteen cattle. The Khoikhoi were very unhappy about this and declared to Van Wijk that they had been forced to trade against their will, asking him to complain to the authorities on their behalf.⁸⁸

Meanwhile Veldsman's *knecht*, Jan Schreuder, had visited Roelof's brother, Gerrit van Wijk, in the Agter Roggeveld and announced his intention of bartering cattle from the Khoikhoi there. He had, he said, already bartered cattle from the Khoikhoi Platje, Spanjir, Klaas and Toontje. Gerrit van Wijk remarked that Toontje had been lying sick on his (Van Wijk's) farm for some time and had certainly not agreed to his cattle being driven away. The correct procedure, Van Wijk suggested, would have been either to inform himself or Toontje. Van Wijk's wife then made a remark that reveals a great deal about the grazing arrangements between the Khoikhoi and the *trekboers*: "Als ons vee onder dat van ons buuren geraakt, mogen wij het selven niet uitsetten, zonde den Baas daarvan kennisse te geeven".⁸⁹

It is clear from this that the "protector" of the cattle was regarded as having some sort of proprietary right over them. Schreuder was ordered away but many other Khoikhoi came to complain to Gerrit van Wijk that the stock which they had earned in his service had been taken from them by force after token payments.⁹⁰

88. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Roelof van Wijk, 26 May 1769. Veldsman bought twenty-seven trek-oxen from Roelof van Wijk for eight Rijksdaalders each. He gave Van Wijk a receipt.

89. "If we have any cattle amongst those of our neighbours even we cannot remove them without notifying the Baas". CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Gerrit van Wijk, 13 April 1769.

90. Ibid. Schreuder's idea of paying Toontje was to give Toontje's brother, Spanjir, two pints of wine, a length of copper beads and a span of bad tobacco. Spanjir drank the wine himself.

Yet another Van Wijk received a visit from Veldsman at this time. In January 1769 Cornelis, the nephew of Gerrit and Roelof, found a large number of cattle and sheep standing in his farm's water supply under the supervision of Veldsman's Khoikhoi servants. Cornelis and his brother Christoffel drove the animals out of the water and told the Khoikhoi that the animals could drink provided that they did not foul the water. When Veldsman himself arrived he did not take kindly to the intervention of the Van Wijk brothers who, he claimed, had tried to prevent Company livestock from drinking. "Dan geloofd jy een hottentot meer als twee Chrissen men?" asked Cornelis indignantly. "Ja - meer geloofd als twee Chrissen menschen die houw ik neer beter als een Hottentot," came Veldsman's insulting reply.⁹¹ He then gave instructions for his large herds and flocks to be outspanned right next to the Van Wijk's home so that the grazing would be impaired. Some time after this most unwelcome visitor had departed Cornelis learnt that as a parting shot Veldsman, who must have possessed a malicious sense of humour, had informed a nearby Khoikhoi called Thys that he had been granted a farm between Cornelis and his father. Even if such a grant had been permissible, the two farms were too close together for this to have been feasible, Thys, moreover, had been promised a Company staff and a captaincy by the departing corporal.⁹²

The power and arrogance of such a minor Company official is a remarkable indication of the influence the VOC was able to exert over the Khoikhoi and *trekboers* of the frontier zone. It seems that Veldsman was determined to flaunt this power for in the Onder Roggeveld he deliberately drove fifty or sixty of his horses into a valley of reeds which Gerrit Visagie had been saving as thatching material. A month later he deliberately drove 400 cattle and a large number of sheep into the same patch of reeds, daring Visagie to complain.⁹³ In the Onder Bokkeveld he bound a Khoikhoi called Smit with a rope and hit him with a *sjambok*. He then dragged Smit to his kraal and informed his wife that Smit would be released in exchange for his animals, namely five cows, three oxen and three milk cows. If Smit wanted to be paid for these animals he was expected to find Veldsman's wagons in the Roggeveld and there receive one span of tobacco, a string of red beads and a bottle of arrack per beast.⁹⁴

It is quite obvious from the above that the Roggeveld *trekboers* did not like the idea that a Company servant could take livestock from their Khoikhoi labourers. Their resistance to such

91. "Do you then believe a Hottentot more than two Christians?" "Yes - more than two Christians whom I regard as being no better than a Hottentot". CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Cornelis van Wijk, 17 April 1769.

92. Ibid.

93. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Gerrit Visagie, 19 May 1769.

94. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Hottentot Smit, 2 June 1769.

powers need not be ascribed to benevolence - though the Van Wijk's do appear to have been benevolent, albeit paternalistic, masters⁹⁵ - for it made sense to attract skilled and motivated herders and drovers as one's labourers. The proprietary control which a *trekboer* could exert over his labourers' livestock made his own position that much more powerful and secure. Land, labour and livestock were the basis of the *trekboer* economy. At this stage the interests of master and servant coincided.

The interests of the Company were, however, different and it was the intervention of people like Veldsman that upset the fragile balance of the open frontier to the detriment of the Khoikhoi. The excessive demands for livestock, backed by force and directed at the Khoikhoi, destroyed the last remnants of their herds and flocks and, in so doing, the last remnants of their independence. It should not be assumed that Veldsman was exceeding his authority. A letter from *Landdrost* Mentz of Swellendam to Governor Tulbagh clarifies this:

Your Excellency will be enabled to perceive, from the returns of the Company's cattle herewith transmitted, that 258 bull calves have been bartered from the Hottentots: but as corporal Veldsman informs me that many of the burghers will not suffer the Hottentots living with them to barter their cattle to the Company, I feel it my duty humbly to submit to the consideration of your Excellency, that if the inhabitants may prevent the Hottentots living with them from bartering their cattle to the Company, the barter, in the course of time, will not yield much profit - for as much as few or no Hottentots no longer reside in the kraals, but for the greater part with the inhabitants...⁹⁶

As the latter remark indicates, the majority of Khoikhoi were no longer independent, and a corollary of this lack of independence was a decline in status. In these circumstances not all colonists were prepared to treat their servants with a benevolent paternalism. As environmental resources and livestock became scarcer, the response of certain colonists was to maltreat their Khoikhoi servants and strip them of their few remaining cattle and sheep. In 1763 for instance a number of Khoikhoi testified against Jan Otto Dideriks of the Roggeveld,⁹⁷ and their evidence illustrates the pressures which could be exerted by some masters against their servants.

95. The Khoikhoi Jantje Wagenrijde, who worked for Roelof van Wijk, had borrowed seven of Van Wijk's oxen in order to travel to the Onder Bokkeveld and fetch his aged father from a kraal there. He was bringing him back to Van Wijk's farm so that he could be cared for when he was stopped by Schreuder who tried to take his laden oxen away. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Hottentot Jantje Wagenrijde, 26 May 1769.

96. Extract of a letter from *Landdrost* Mentz to Governor Tulbagh, Swellendam, 22 Feb 1769, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part 3, p.18. n.2.

97. Strictly speaking Dideriks was of the Hantam, indeed, he was the first to have registered a farm, "Akerendam", in the Hantam in 1750. He also registered a farm, "Driefontein", in the Roggeveld in 1755. CA, RLR 12, p.167; CA RLR 14, p.85.

According to the evidence of the Khoikhoi Danser and Coridon, it was hard to work for Dideriks. Both labourers had lived on Dideriks' farm for several years (in Coridon's case for ten years) but had left because their wages and food were being withheld from them. Dideriks had refused to allow them to remove their own livestock, which consisted of fairly large flocks of sheep (Coridon claimed to have a hundred) and some cattle. Dideriks, it seems, slaughtered some of these sheep for his own consumption, refused to hand over the remainder and chased away Danser and Coridon, threatening to shoot them when they protested. It is clear that it was not only the livestock of the Khoikhoi over which Dideriks claimed possession but the persons of the Khoikhoi too. One of his Khoikhoi servants, Kleynveld by name, had attempted to run away but had been recaptured by one of Dideriks' slaves. Dideriks and his "bastaard sons", Carel and Andries,⁹⁸ began to torture Klynveld, chaining him, kicking him, beating him and pulling out his finger nails with a pair of pliers. The reason for this torture was to get Klynveld to disclose how many sheep he had allegedly slaughtered. Whether or not Klynveld had taken any sheep is not recorded for he died from his ill-treatment after being dragged outside in his chains and dumped behind the kraal.⁹⁹

Dideriks was sentenced to twenty-five years on Robben Island.¹⁰⁰ The relative severity of his sentence suggests that his conduct was outside the norms of acceptable behaviour, but he was not unique. There are strong similarities between his case and that of Carel Hendrik Buijtendag of the Koue Bokkeveld who brutalised his Khoikhoi servants in the 1770s. Buijtendag's history has been recorded elsewhere¹⁰¹ but the official response to his cruelty towards his servants suggests that, as the frontier moved further away from Cape Town, it was becoming a slow and difficult procedure for a mistreated Khoikhoi to receive either justice or protection from the authorities. The vast majority of Khoikhoi complaints against their masters were probably never even recorded but, ominously, more and more reports of Khoikhoi losing their livestock to their employers, or suffering from restrictions of movement, came before the authorities. All indications are that from the late 1760s the condition of Khoikhoi labourers on the frontier began

98. These sons had been begotten on the "Hottentottinne Caatje". Dideriks used to brand the sheep of his Khoikhoi labourers with Caatje's mark when his labourers tried to reclaim them. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van slaaf Jacob van Mallabaar behoren aan Jacobus van Rheenen, 24 Nov. 1763.

99. CA, 1/STB 3/11, Relas van Hottentot Danser, 2 Nov. 1763; Relas van Hottentot Coridon, 2 Nov. 1763; Relas van slaaf Jacob van Mallabaar, 24 Nov. 1763.

100. N.A. Worden, "Rural Slavery in the Western Districts of Cape Colony During the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1982), p.376.

101. N. Penn, "Anarchy and Authority in the Koue Bokkeveld, 1739-1779: The Banishing of Carel Buijtendag", *Kleio*, XVII, 1985, pp.24-43.

to deteriorate as both wages and family members were withheld from them when they attempted to leave the service of a particular employer.¹⁰²

This suggests that there was increasing competition for both Khoikhoi labour as well as for pastoral and environmental resources. Inevitably, such pressures had an impact on the San, as both Khoikhoi wishing to escape from colonial oppression and *trekboers* in search of better grazing began to encroach on the territory of the hunter-gatherers. Those Khoikhoi who fled into Bushmanland were by no means assured of being treated as allies and could well have been regarded as yet another set of competitors for scarce resources. It would not, however, be unreasonable to suppose that, even in the late 1760s, some Khoikhoi would have joined the San in common resistance to the encroachment of the *trekboers*. What was the situation of the Roggeveld San in the 1760s?

Commando activities in the Roggeveld after 1755 and before the 1770s are not very well documented and our knowledge of San resistance during this period is therefore rather sketchy. There is a mysterious lacuna in the records concerning an incident which took place in the 1760s. In the 1770s Thunberg claimed that there had been a massacre of 186 San in the Roggeveld in 1765.¹⁰³ The only confirmation of this report comes from the farm "Oorlogskloof" near present day Sutherland in the Roggeveld. There are a great many graves here, some thirty, laid out in three groups, with piles of rocks above them. There is also a separate gravestone nearby with the date 1768 on it. Both the name of the farm and the massed graves lead one to suppose that there was some bloody engagement here in 1768; and that the single, dated grave belongs to a colonist whilst the others belong to Khoisan victims. There is also a mass grave, with Khoisan remains, on the Farm "Gunsfontein". But there is no reason to suppose that this dates from the 1760s since it could equally well be a legacy of the murderous and better documented fighting of the 1770s.¹⁰⁴

The increased San resistance after 1770 was linked to the growing competition for, and deterioration of, the environmental resources of the interior escarpment. Between 1740 and 1770 a total of 221 new loan-farms had been registered in the Roggeveld and 75 in the Nieuweveld.¹⁰⁵

102. In February 1771 there were a number of complaints from Khoikhoi in the Swellendam district that wages were being withheld from them. See O.M. Bergh to *Landdrost* of Swellendam, 15 Feb. 1771, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, pp.8-9. See also N. Penn, "Labour, land and livestock", pp.13-19 and chapter 7 below.

103. V.S. Forbes, (ed.), *Carl Peter Thunberg Travels At The Cape Of Good Hope 1772-1775* (Cape Town, 1986), pp.290-291.

104. Karel Schoeman, *Die Wereld Van Die Digtter: 'n boek oor Sutherland en die Roggeveld ter ere van N.P. van Wyk Louw* (Pretoria, 1986), pp.19-20.

105. These figures are based on a study of the loan-farm records, CA, RLR 10-21 inclusive.

But the colonial impact was not restricted to the locality of the farms. Every summer the *trekboers*, of whom there were many more than there were farms registered, roamed deep into Bushmanland in search of fresh pastures for their stock. With their guns and horses the colonial farmers were also able to hunt the game, upon which the San depended, with devastating efficiency.¹⁰⁶ The pressure was mounting and in 1770 unprecedented hostilities broke out along the length and breadth of the frontier zone.

According to traditions recorded amongst the Roggeveld farmers of the early nineteenth century the outbreak of fighting in 1770 had a specific, localised *causus belli* which ignited an already explosive situation. By the second half of the eighteenth century the Van Reenen family was one of the wealthiest at the Cape, holding extensive properties and ultimately winning the Company meat contract. In addition to owning farms on the eastern frontier, the Van Reenens also had farms in the Hantam and at the Sak River (the latter probably *legplaatsen*). Before 1770 relations between the *trekboers* and the San of the Roggeveld were, apparently, amicable but this was changed by a *knecht* of the Van Reenens, Andries Jacobs, who either beat a San captain, Hacqua (the name meant "horse" and was acquired from his swiftness in running), with a *sjambok* or abducted a San woman. Jacobs was killed by the San in retaliation and his cattle were stolen. In response to this the local *trekboers* raised a commando and attacked Hacqua's kraal. It was this event, tradition has it, that marked the start of almost ceaseless fighting.¹⁰⁷

The man who recorded this tradition, Colonel Collins (who toured the frontier districts of the colony collecting information for the British government in 1809), also noted that at about the same time as the attack on Hacqua's kraal:

some Hottentots left the service of the farmers, and joined the Bosjiesman, to whom they gave the example of robbing them, which they soon followed, and which has contributed in a greater or less degree since that period, not infrequently attended by murder.¹⁰⁸

Collins was probably referring to the events surrounding the murder of Johan Hendrik Teutman and his wife and daughter in the Roggeveld in 1772. Since this incident is indeed of considerable importance and illuminates the situation in the Roggeveld at the time most admirably it merits a more detailed consideration.

106. See chapter 11 below for the impact of colonial hunting parties on Bushmanland by the 1790s.

107. "Journal of a Tour to the North-Eastern Boundary, the Orange River, and the Storm Mountains" by Colonel Collins, in 1809, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, p.34; also Part III, p.64, n.

108. Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, p.34.

THE ROGGEVELD REBELLION OF 1772

In 1772 the Louw family was one of the most influential in the Roggeveld. The recently deceased Adriaan Louw senior, patriarchal head of an extensive family, had owned five farms which were now held by his widow and managed by his *knecht*, Nicolaas Muller.¹⁰⁹ Such extensive holdings required a large labour force which, for the most part, was comprised of the local Khoikhoi. One of the workers was, however, a "Bastaard-Hottentot" named Thys who lived with Muller at the farm "de Kareeboom".¹¹⁰

One day in April 1772 Muller sent Thys to the Bokkeveld in order to fetch a horse which Muller had purchased from a certain Augustus Lodewyk de Beer. On his way back Thys visited the farm of Pieter van Heerden, also in the Bokkeveld. Van Heerden asked Thys whether the "Hottentots" in the Roggeveld were still stealing as much as before, to which question Thys was obliged to reply that both "Hottentots" and "Bushmen" had recently stolen the sheep of Willem van Zijl. Van Heerden then made a pronouncement which profoundly disturbed Thys:

Als dat zoo is en zij willen hunne rust niet houden zoo zal ik, als ik van den Landdrost last krijgen mogte om daar heen met bokkevelds menschen, op commando te gaan, alle de in de craalen zijnde hottentots en basterds doodschieten, want zij leggen 't doch maar op steelen aan.¹¹¹

Since he was a "Bastaard" himself Thys sought clarification. "Dan zou de baas mij ook dood schieten, en ik heb nog nooit geen scaap of iets gestoolen." "Ja," Van Heerden replied, "jy moet dan in geene kraalen blyven; met byvoeging want de hottentotten willen dit jaar in 't geheel geener uithouden; de boeren hunnen niets uitvoeren want ze moeten altijd maar op commandos."¹¹²

As the, by now, highly alarmed Thys made his way home he mulled over what Van Heerden had told him. It would seem from Van Heerden's remarks that the Roggeveld was home to a considerable number of independent kraals, both Khoikhoi and "Bastaard". In the atmosphere of

109. My reconstruction of the 1772 rebellion is largely based on information contained in CA, CJ 403, *Crimineel Processtukken*, 1772, pp.303-499. Additional information has been gleaned from the loan-farm records, CA, RLR, and De Villiers and Pama's *Geslagsregisters*.

110. CA, CJ 403, *Relaas van Basterd Hottentot Thys*, pp.459-468.

111. "If that is the case and they do not want to keep the peace I shall come with a commando of Bokkeveld people, if I get permission from the *Landdrost*, and shoot dead all of the kraal-dwelling Hottentots and bastards because they only exist by stealing." Ibid.

112. "Then the Boss is going to shoot me as well and I have never stolen a sheep or anything else." "Yes. So you had better not stay in any kraals; in addition the Hottentots are not going to last another year; the Boers have not done so yet because they are always on commando." Ibid.

heightened tension and increasing commando activity it was no longer possible to be neutral. One was either for the colonists, in the colonial commandos and domiciled on a colonial farm, or against them. Significantly, Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" were perceived of as being as great a threat as the San, proof that, in the eyes of the *trekboers*, there was already some community of interest between the non-European inhabitants of the frontier zone.

Stopping at Jochem Scholtz senior's farm Thys picked up two letters for delivery to Scholtz's daughter, Elizabeth, who had married Gerrit Matthys van Wijk the year before. Gerrit lived at one of his family's farms in the Roggeveld, probably that of the widow of Christoffel van Wijk, though it cannot be named with certainty, for the Van Wijks, like the Louws, had multiplied prolifically and brought a great deal of land under their control. The *knecht* at the farm was a certain Nicolaas Claasen and Thys told him what Van Heerden had threatened, asking him whether he thought it was possible. Unfortunately for his peace of mind Claasen assured him that it was.¹¹³ Unfortunately, too, for the peace of the Roggeveld Thys' news now began to spread in an increasingly distorted form throughout the district, sowing fear and disturbance wherever it was heard.

Amongst the Khoikhoi on Van Wijk's farm who seized on the rumour were two men named Jas and Toontje. They believed that Thys had delivered a letter from the "groot volk" which stated that a commando was going to come from the Bokkeveld and kill all of the Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" of the Roggeveld. This report they passed on, from one Khoikhoi to another, causing great anxiety about staying either in their kraals or on colonial farms.¹¹⁴ It is notable that neither the Khoikhoi nor the colonists found Thys' story incredible, an indication that the situation within the frontier zone was already extremely tense. The fact that Thys had returned with letters seemed, to the illiterate Khoikhoi, conclusive proof that they were going to become the target of commando activity.

It is important to realise that, in the rebellion which followed, rumour played an essential rather than an accidental part. In this respect the Roggeveld rebellion was conforming to other uprisings of groups of rural, pre-literate people against exploitation and oppression. As Ranajit Guha has written: "rumour is both a universal and necessary carrier of insurgency in any pre-industrial,

¹¹³. Ibid.

¹¹⁴. CA, CJ 403, Relas van Hottentot Jas, pp.479-480.

pre-literate society".¹¹⁵ Why this should be the case, and why this was indeed the case in the Roggeveld rebellion needs some consideration.

What is rumour? In their study of the psychology of rumour Allport and Postman note that rumours only circulate if the topic has some importance for the individuals who hear and spread the story. They also state that "any human need may provide the motive power to rumour".¹¹⁶ Thus, there is no one type of rumour and rumours may emerge from sexual interests, anxieties, hopes, desires, hatreds or fears. Rumours must, however, address important concerns in order to flourish. They must also, according to Allport and Postman, contain the essential ingredient of ambiguity. Although there is often a "kernel of truth" in a rumour it is actually its ambiguity which makes it so potent.¹¹⁷ Guha elaborates upon this point and emphasises that it is incorrect to regard rumour as being either a lie or a type of news. It should, perhaps, be regarded as a form somewhere between a tale and a myth. Whereas the source of news is identifiable and can be traced back to a point of origin:

rumour is necessarily anonymous and its origin unknown (even though on occasions ... a fictive source may be assigned to it). Hence its message cannot be authenticated by any reference to a source nor can its purveyors be asked to guarantee its accuracy or answer for its effects in any way. Secondly, the process of transmission implies, in the case of news, a necessary distinction between the communicator and his audience. No such distinction exists in the case of rumours which are passed on 'from a teller to a hearer who himself becomes a teller' - a instance of absolute transitivity. In other words, the encoding and decoding of rumour are collapsed, unlike news, at each point of its relay.¹¹⁸

For Guha, then, anonymity and transitivity contribute to the essential ambiguity of rumour and enable it to function as a mobile and explosive agent of insurgency. Anonymity permits the meaning of the rumour to remain open, unrestricted by authenticity of source and adaptable to the impulses of the tellers and hearers who transform it during the course of transmission. The extreme transitivity of rumour enhances its rapid and spontaneous transmission, especially within pre-literate societies where communication through oral speech thrives on immediacy and spontaneity.¹¹⁹

115. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1992), p.251.

116. G.W. Allport and L. Postman, *The Psychology of Rumour* (New York, 1947), pp.33-36.

117. *Ibid.*, p.33.

118. Guha, *Peasant Insurgency*, pp.259-60.

119. Gayatri Spivak is critical of Guha's distinctions between written and spoken pronouncements. See G. Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in G. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics* (London, 1988), pp.211-5.

Although it is possible for messages of insurgency to spread within pre-literate rural societies by both verbal and non-verbal forms the former means is by far the most important. Amongst verbal forms spoken utterances are, naturally, more important than writing in such societies, though this does not mean that written messages cannot be "read" by preliterates in their own way and imbued with their own meaning. We have already noted how the letters which Thys delivered to the Roggeveld were taken as signs of impending doom, possessing a meaning quite independent from their written content. Such use of written documents are fairly common in pre-literate societies. Georges Lefebvre, in his study of the Great Fear of 1789, cites several examples in which illiterate peasants flaunted books or posters purporting to contain the king's orders but which were really nothing of the sort. A verbal signal was being converted into a visual one whose meaning was now as malleable as rumour.¹²⁰

Rumour does not, of course, cause an uprising or insurgency. The Roggeveld Khoikhoi had good reason to rebel long before Thys delivered his message. As Guha explains: "it is the subjection of the rural masses to a common source of exploitation and oppression that makes them rebel even before they learn to combine in peasant associations".¹²¹ What rumour does is to act as the "trigger and mobilizer" for insurgency.¹²² The reasons for its efficacy in this respect are related to its characteristics as a particular type of spoken utterance. Pre-literate societies are, as we have seen, largely dependent on spoken utterances for the circulation of information and rumour, according to Guha, is spoken utterance *par excellence*. Speech "responds to any given stimulus more urgently, emotionally, and dynamically than written utterance" and rumour, with its far greater functional immediacy (derived from the importance of its content, its ambiguity and the context of social tension in which it circulates), creates an almost uncontrollable impulse for one person to pass it on to another. This passing on of a message creates and implies a bond of community between transmitter and receiver. It helps to evoke a "comradeship response" of equality and solidarity. The socialising aspect of rumour, in turn, helps to explain the speed with which rumours are disseminated.¹²³

In the case of the Roggeveld Khoikhoi Thys' story certainly spread extremely rapidly, not just amongst the colonial Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" but amongst independent Khoikhoi and *trekboers* too. It would seem as though the rumour was used as a shibboleth, to test the "comradeship

120. Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear Of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (Princeton, 1982), p.96.

121. Guha, *Peasant Insurgency*, p.225.

122. Ibid., p.256.

123. Ibid., pp.256-8.

response" of the recipient. Whereas the news served to draw dependent and independent Khoikhoi together, with few exceptions it served to separate white *trekboers* from the rest.

Despite the pressures of the previous thirty years and the extensive alienation of land there were, still, a considerable number of Roggeveld Khoikhoi who were not living on colonial farms. Toontje himself was the head of an independent kraal and when Jas told the *trekboer* Pieter Visagie what Thys had said Visagie's reply was: "Daar leggen zoo veele kleine craaltjes in het roggeveld die geen kwaad doen waarom zoude men die willen doodschieten?"¹²⁴ A good example of a Khoikhoi who was still attempting to maintain an independent existence was Oude Jantje Links, whose experience was probably typical of many of his countrymen. He had initially lived on a farm in the Roggeveld under the Louw's *knecht*, Nicolaas Muller. After a while he had established a kraal for himself further away but had been driven off by the Dutch who took the land for the use of their own livestock. Oude Jantje Links was forced to move to the Droogeberg, an aptly named place of few attractions, where he and his sons tended their flocks. Even here, however, he was not to be left alone for when some San stole Cornelis Coetzee's sheep and killed his shepherd, Oude Jantje was commandeered for commando duty. On this occasion he was, at least, given a musket by Cornelis van Wijk but, like many other Khoikhoi, he cannot have relished this compulsory military service.¹²⁵

It is not possible to date this commando exactly but it probably took place between 1770 and 1772 when there was a great deal of commando activity in the area. In April 1770 *veldkorporaal* Adriaan van Jaarsveld reported that the "Hottentots" of the area beyond the Salt River, behind the Koup, (i.e. the Nieuweveld) had stolen and slaughtered eighty-four cattle. Eight of the robbers had been killed by Van Jaarsveld's commando and an unspecified number had been captured.¹²⁶ In November 1770 *Landdrost* Faber of Stellenbosch reported to the governor that there had been widespread stock theft and murder in the districts beyond the Salt River in the Roggeveld and the Koup, as well as beyond the Doorn River and the Nieuweveld. Three shepherds had been killed by the "Bosjesmans Hottentots", one of them a Khoikhoi servant of Cornelis van Wijk,¹²⁷ and it is therefore possible that it was on this occasion that Oude Jantje Links was given a musket by Van Wijk and forced to take part in a retaliatory commando. It is not known how many of the robbers were killed but Oude Jantje remembered later that the commando in which he served had

124. "There are so many little kraals in the Roggeveld that have not done any harm why should any one want to shoot them dead?" CA, CJ 403, Relas van Hottentot Jas, pp.479-480.

125. CA, CJ 403, Relas van Oude Jantje alias Oude Jantje Links, pp.447-455.

126. Faber to Tulbagh, 4 July 1770, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, pp.7-8.

127. Faber to Tulbagh, 6 Nov. 1770, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.8.

been led by a certain Johan Jurgen Faber¹²⁸ (not to be confused with *Landdrost* Faber of Stellenbosch). The following year, in the Koup, some Khoisan made a night attack on several farm houses. Jacob Joubert's house was riddled with arrows, three of his servants killed and 900 of his sheep stolen. The local *trekboers* were forced into a temporary evacuation of the area but a commando, led by Van Jaarsveld, killed ninety-two Khoisan in retaliation.¹²⁹

Details of the above events are sparse, since the original reports have not been found, but it may readily be seen that the killing of ninety-two Khoisan on a single commando represents a significant escalation in the scale and intensity of violence. In April the next year, 1772, a further fifty-one Khoisan were shot dead by a commando after a series of robberies in the Nieuweveld in which 102 cattle and 519 sheep were stolen.¹³⁰ Life in the Cape interior was, therefore, highly insecure and it is understandable that people like Oude Jantje Links would lend an ear to Thys' bad news. It was not, however, from Thys that Oude Jantje heard of the impending extermination of kraal dwelling Khoikhoi but from Johan Jurgen Faber.

Faber was an illiterate ex-sailor who was working as *knecht* for Lodewyk Jacobus Theron on a farm at the Vis River in the Roggeveld.¹³¹ His past experiences as a commando leader might have equipped him to exercise leadership on a small scale but they had not taught him how to act wisely. Thus it was that when Faber encountered Oude Jantje on the farm of Cornelis van Wijk he took great delight in conveying to him his own version of Thys' news:

Ja hottentot, soo ik je seg, wat het groote volk doen sal, dan sult jij bedroeft weesen; waar sult jij dan blijven, want 't groot volk sal al de hottentots die in 't Roggeveld zijn schoon maaken laten, dat is dood laten schieten, en sulx soo wel kinderen als groote hottentots mannen en vrouwen.¹³²

Oude Jantje Links, who had seen at first hand what commandos could do, returned to the Droogeberg a very worried man. He warned those Khoikhoi whom he met of the forthcoming attack on the "makke hottentots" and, from others, received corroboration that the "Bastaard" Thys had said the same thing as Faber.¹³³ The stage was set for a bloody tragedy.

128. CA, CJ 403, Relas of Oude Jantje Links, pp.447-455.

129. Faber to Tulbagh, 3 May 1771, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, pp.9-10.

130. Faber to Van Plettenberg, 10 April 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.11.

131. CA C.J. 403, Relas van Jan Jurgen Faber, p.487.

132. "Yes Hottentot, if I were to tell you what the big people are going to do you would be sad, because the big people are going to clean up all the Hottentots in the Roggeveld, that is shoot them dead, children as well as adults, men and women." CA C.J. 403, Relas van Oude Jantje Links, pp.447-455.

133. Ibid.

The rumour, borne by Toontje, travelled from the "voorste" Roggeveld farm of Christoffel van Wijk's widow to the "agter" Roggeveld farm where Nicolaas Muller presided. Once it reached his Khoikhoi shepherds they decided to desert forthwith and make their way to a cave which they knew of in a rock face beyond the farm. There were ten of them besides Toontje: Klyn Booij, Cupido, Spanser, Springveld, Danser, Kromme Ruijter, Fix, Claas, Jantje (or Oude Ruijter) and Piet.¹³⁴ Four of them had muskets and some powder and lead which had been given to them to protect themselves from wild animals. They simply abandoned the majority of cattle and sheep under their care taking, initially, a mere 250 sheep for their own use. As they proceeded to the cave, however, Toontje remembered that he had an old score to settle and, given the circumstances, decided that the time had arrived to do so. Whilst Cupido, Spanser and Springveld looked after the sheep the other men paid a visit to Johan Hendrik Teutman.¹³⁵

Some time before this, Toontje and his brother Kleyn Booij had been busy buying drink from Lodewyk de Beer when, engrossed in their transaction, they had allowed their cattle to stray into Teutman's garden. The incensed Teutman gave Toontje a blow which the Khoikhoi neither forgot nor forgave. It is not clear where this incident took place since De Beer was primarily a Bokkeveld farmer and there is no record in the *Oude Wildschuttenboeken* of Teutman having rented a farm at all. From other sources, however, it is clear that Teutman had a farm in the Roggeveld very close to Nicolaas Muller. He was described as being a burgher and might have been a *bijwooner* on Van Wijk's land for he was certainly not a *knecht*.¹³⁶

On the April day that Muller's Khoikhoi labourers decided to desert, Teutman, who was fairly elderly, was sitting at home whilst his wife and daughter were busy about the house. The men suddenly appeared before him and demanded tobacco. Teutman's response was somewhat surprising but was indicative of the atmosphere of mistrust which pervaded the Roggeveld: "Jou baas soude denken dat ik met jou leyden konkelde, ik kan jou geen tabak geeven".¹³⁷ Kleyn Booij then aimed his musket at Teutman and pulled the trigger: the gun misfired. Fearfully Teutman cried out "O God!" but Kleyn Booij hurriedly reloaded and fired again. This time Teutman fell lifeless to the ground. Danser then shot dead Teutman's wife and, when Teutman's daughter ran from the cook-house to investigate, Kromme Ruijter shot her too. The Khoikhoi dragged the

134. It is possible that some of these Khoikhoi (Spanser and Toontje for instance) were the same as those who were with the Van Wijks in 1769. See p.191 above.

135. CA C.J. 403, pp.303-322.

136. Ibid.

137. "Your Boss will think that I am plotting with you, I cannot give you any tobacco". Ibid.

bodies outside and dumped them in a nearby river bed. That night the murderers stayed in the house.¹³⁸

Teutman's Khoikhoi servant, Jantje Reebok, had been away fetching sheep from Willem Steenkamp and when he returned later that night he was surprised to find his boss' house occupied by Khoikhoi shepherds. His wife, Mary, explained what had happened but since Reebok had already heard from Oude Jantje Links, whom he had met on the Droogeborg, that all Khoikhoi were to be killed he had no hesitation in joining Toontje's band. The house was stripped of weapons, clothes and food and the next morning the group departed for the cave.¹³⁹

At the cave they were joined by Cupido, Spanser and Springveld, as well as by their wives and children. Soon Oude Jantje Links and his son Kleyn Jantje Links - as well as Oude Dirk and Kleyn Dirk - arrived, accompanied by their women and children. A nearby family of independent Khoikhoi, who had never lived with the colonists and understood no Dutch, also added their numbers to the group so that, eventually, there were over seventy people waiting fearfully in the mountain fastness.¹⁴⁰

The site they had chosen was at the top of a steep kloof called, by the Khoikhoi, "Cagang" and probably the present day Gannaga Pass.¹⁴¹ Any one attempting to reach the cave would have to climb up the kloof in full view of the fugitives. The Khoikhoi defenders also built a stone wall across the approach to the cave, from behind which they could safely fire at their enemies. Those colonists who were later confronted with the task of storming the cave regarded it as an impossibility.¹⁴²

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid., pp.320-322.

140. Ibid.; Relaas van Klijn Booij, Klijn Jantje, Klijn Dirk, Cupido, Spanser, Springveld en Jantje van Tuijman, pp.383-446.

141. When Thunberg and Masson visited the Roggeveld in 1774 they visited two farms belonging to the Louws in the vicinity of the Gannaga Pass; "Haartebeestfontein", at the head of the Kookfontein River, and "Knegts Banken", slightly to the north. Both of these belonged to Jacobus Adriaan Louw (though there is some confusion as Thunberg refers to both an Adriaan Louw and a Jacobus Louw). It is tempting to suppose that "Knegts Banken" was the residence of the Louw's *knecht*, Nicolaas Muller. See Forbes, *Thunberg*, p.298 and Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p.42.

142. Ibid., Relaas van Captain Kees, pp.375-382. In September 1993 I went to search for the cave and found a cave in exactly the place where the records suggested it would be, near the top of the Gannaga Pass. Professor John Parkington, of the Archaeology Department at the University of Cape Town, accompanied me and confirmed that there were signs of human occupancy in the cave as well as faint painted handprints (usually interpreted as a Khoisan sign) on the cave's wall.

For about a fortnight, however, nothing much happened. The Khoikhoi fugitives maintained a sharp lookout for any signs of activity and kept Nicolaas Muller's farm under observation. During this time it does not seem as if the Roggeveld colonists were aware of the Teutmans' murder, nor that there was a hostile stronghold within their midst. It was, in fact, the Khoikhoi who drew attention to themselves by stealing some more sheep. There was a flock in the vicinity being looked after by Januarie, a slave of the Louws who had been appointed by Muller. The men debated what should be done with Januarie and decided to kill him since, they argued, if they were to be betrayed they would all be killed simply because they were Khoikhoi. Neither Christians nor slaves should therefore be spared. The unfortunate Januarie was duly seized and despite the fact that he cried out pitifully, "Ik heb jouluyden immers geen quaad gedaan!"¹⁴³ he was stabbed with an assegai and his throat was cut. His murderers made off with 575 sheep but some of the flock returned that night to Louw's house without their shepherd. It was this that alerted Muller to the fact that things were far from well in the neighbourhood. Shortly afterwards he heard of the murder of the Teutman family whilst a letter came from young Gerrit van Wijk to inform him of the news which Thys had been spreading. It was also reported that the fugitives were ensconced in a virtually impregnable cave not far from Muller himself. The time had come to call for assistance.¹⁴⁴

The local *trekboers* now felt as insecure as their servants had two weeks before. When they wrote to the *veldkorporaal* of the Agter Roggeveld, Willem van Wijk, who in turn wrote to other *veldkorporaals* further afield, their message was that the Khoikhoi were planning to attack all the Roggeveld farmers and murder all the Christians. By the time Lucas Sigismond Faber, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, wrote to Acting Governor Van Plettenberg concerning the matter it had assumed even more alarming proportions. It was imperative, Faber urged, to send assistance:

in order to smother in its birth, this murderous and rapacious band, and to stop them from the commission of further excesses, for otherwise the greatest mischiefs are to be apprehended, should the said Hottentots, united with the Bosjesmans, fall upon the inhabitants of that quarter, of whom three have already abandoned their farms.¹⁴⁵

There was thus a very real fear that the Khoikhoi revolt might be united with San resistance and succeed in driving the colonists from the Roggeveld.

Willem van Wijk believed that only hand-grenades could dislodge the band from their position. The government acceded to his request by sending a corporal, together with five grenadiers duly

143. "I have not done any harm to you have I?" Ibid., p.324.

144. Ibid., Relas van Nicolaas Muller, pp.351-355.

145. Faber to Van Plettenberg, 23 May 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.11.

equipped with grenades, from the Castle garrison.¹⁴⁶ Further reinforcements were sent from neighbouring districts until about one hundred men were gathered at Gerrit van Wijk's farm.¹⁴⁷ Before their arrival, however, the Khoikhoi had paid a nocturnal visit to Nicolaas Muller who, unlike others, had not abandoned his farm. The rebels' intention was to kill the *knecht* but their resolve was somewhat dampened by a report, from two of the farm's female Khoikhoi (whom they had approached for dagga), that Muller had two Dutchmen staying with him. The raiders contented themselves with firing thirteen shots at the farmhouse and wounding two horses before returning to the cave.¹⁴⁸

As it transpired the hand-grenades were not necessary. The *veldkorporaals* of the Agter Hex River district, Gideon Joubert and Pieter Jacobs, had had the foresight to recruit Captains Kees and Bokkebaas of the Gonjemans or Cochoqua Khoikhoi. The Cochoqua had a long history of collaboration with the colonists and they undertook, in exchange for being provided with guns, to subdue the rebel Khoikhoi of the Roggeveld.¹⁴⁹ For the assembled commando beneath the cave this was a most agreeable solution for they cannot have relished the prospect of a direct assault up the mountainside. Four days after the attack on Muller, Kees, who had accompanied Jacobs from the Hex River, was entrusted with thirty guns for his volunteers whilst the rest of the commando encamped at Jacobus Louw's farm. Stealthily and circuitously the Cochoqua approached the kloof, remaining hidden behind rocks during the day and having to go without food as a result. At nightfall Kees and his men crept silently up the kloof, managing to reach the top without being detected. They then hid themselves close to the cave and waited.¹⁵⁰

Next morning, unaware of the danger, eight of the rebel Khoikhoi stepped out of the cave. Their plan was to visit the nearby kraal of a certain independent Khoikhoi called Oude Baas, possibly with the idea of recruiting him to their ranks. Suddenly Kees and his men sprang from behind the rocks and fired a volley of shots at them. Six fell dead - Toontje, Kromme Ruijter, Fix, Jantje Hartkop, another Jantje and Claas - whilst Klejn Dirk and Oude Jantje Links ran back unscathed into the shelter of the cave. Captain Kees then called on them to lay down their guns - now reduced to three - and surrender. Klejn Booï and Jantje Links asked for a pardon but Kees answered that they would all have to go before the authorities, face charges and make a

146. O.M. Bergh to W. Van Wyk, 25 May 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.12.

147. CA, CJ 403, Relas van Schalk Willem Burger, pp.359-366; Relas van Captain Kees, pp.375-382.

148. Ibid., pp.324-325; Relas van Nicolaas Muller, pp.351-355; Relas van Klijn Jantje, pp.395-402.

149. Faber to Governor, 26 June 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.13 and p 107, n.; CA, CJ 403, Relas of Captain Kees, pp.375-382. See Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.133-134 for details of earlier Cochoqua collaboration.

150. CA, CJ 403, pp.327-328; Relas van Captain Kees, pp.375-382.

declaration. Sixty-two men, women and children were taken prisoner but one "young clever fellow" managed to escape. Four hundred sheep were recovered.¹⁵¹

The captives were taken to the farm of the widow of Adriaan Louw (i.e. Muller's farm) whilst Kees and his men fired a salvo of ten shots to signal their success. The waiting commando thereupon descended from the heights, where they had been observing proceedings from a safe vantage point, and the prisoners were escorted to Cape Town. Danser, who had been the one to kill Teutman's wife, died along the way and it is tempting to speculate that certain members of the commando treated him too roughly.¹⁵²

On their arrival in Cape Town the prisoners were observed by the Swedish botanist Thunberg who was, at that time, resident in the town. Thunberg mistakenly believed that "these Hottentots were Boshiesmen", and that they had, moreover, devastated two villages and defended themselves by "rolling large stones down upon their enemies", but he was probably only repeating the exaggerated beliefs of the excited populace. Despite these errors he did report some information that does ring true:

They did not deny their crimes, but asserted that they acted so in their own defence, the Europeans making every year fresh encroachments upon their lands and possessions, and forcing them continually further up into the country, whence they were driven back again by the other Hottentots, or else killed.¹⁵³

It is these "other Hottentots" who were "Boshiesmen" and not the woeful band of nine and fifty captives brought in irons to Cape Town.

Thunberg has left us an eye-witness description of them which reveals, amongst other things, the extent to which European apparel had failed to conquer the Roggeveld by 1772. They were:

...of a dark brown complexion, some of whom were naked, wearing only a band around their waists, which covered the pudenda before. Others wore, hanging loose over their shoulders, a sheep's skin, the ends of which scarcely met before, the upper part going, like a calash, over the head. The women had their little ones hanging behind on their shoulders; and girls eleven or twelve years of age had already children. The women were adorned with ear-rings, and broad rings of metal round their wrists. Their mouths and cheekbones were very prominent, so that they bore the strongest resemblance imaginable to apes. After these

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid.

153. Forbes, (ed.), *Thunberg*, pp.46-47.

Hottentots had been in prison for some time at the Cape, they lost their colour, and became almost white.¹⁵⁴

The male prisoners, in fact, had to wait until the end of October before they came to trial. The women and children were placed "among such of the inhabitants as will take any of them into service, for their food".¹⁵⁵ The "Bastaard" Thys also had to stand trial, for the authorities believed that he had declared that he had orders to murder all the Khoikhoi of the Roggeveld personally. This seems an unlikely thing for Thys to have said and it was probably yet a further distortion of the truth. This did not deter the Council of Justice from doing its utmost to establish the network of transmission which led to and from Thys. By discovering the source of the rumour and silencing it they hoped to remove the possibility of future rebellion. In this they were acting like rulers throughout history who, when faced with rebellion, believed that it must have been caused by rumour and that behind the rumour was some conspiracy. Though we have seen that rumours do not cause rebellion the authorities were correct to regard it as dangerously subversive and their attempts to suppress it are therefore understandable. It is distinctly possible that in their search for certainty and their determination to pin the source of the rumours on to one man the Council of Justice greatly simplified the story and the role of Thys may not have been as prominent as the records suggest. Rumours are not spread by one person alone and Thys, on trial for his life, was desperate to inculcate others in the chain of voices.

As it was, Pieter van Heerden, the man who had first frightened Thys with threats of an annihilating commando, denied ever having mentioned such a thing.¹⁵⁶ Jan Faber also denied having said a similar thing to Oude Jantje Links although the Khoikhoi insisted that, not only had he said it, but that he had said it in the presence of Cornelis van Wijk. Van Wijk denied this whilst Faber asserted that he had never set eyes on Oude Jantje Links in his life. The latter statement was somewhat invalidated by Oude Jantje Link's ability to identify Faber when the court put him to the test. The Council of Policy did not, however, feel that it could accept the word of a Khoikhoi against that of two Europeans and neither Thys nor Oude Jantje Links were believed.¹⁵⁷

154. It is interesting to note that this description, a classic example of the presentation of the "Other", ends with the insight that European institutions, in this case imprisonment, can actually physically whiten (i.e. read "civilise") savages. Ibid., p.47. See also p.143.

155. O.M. Bergh to Landdrost of Stellenbosch, 28 June 1772 and Faber to the Governor, 29 June 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p. 14.

156. CA, CJ 403, pp.330-331.

157. CA, CJ 403, pp.332-333, 492-493. See W. Dooling, *Law and Community*, for other examples of the relative weighting of the testimonies of Khoikhoi versus European in court.

Sentence was passed on 31 December 1772. Kleyn Booï was bound to a cross and "broken thereon alive, from under upwards, with the coup de grace". Kleyn Jantje Links, who was deemed to have held Januarie, the slave, whilst Fix and Jantje Hartkop killed him, was hanged. Their bodies were left to rot in the open. Kleyn Dirk, Cupido, Spanser, Springveld, Jantje Reebok and Oude Jantje Links were all severely flogged but the first four of these prisoners suffered the further punishment of having their achilles tendons cut out and being sentenced to a life of hard labour at the Company's slave lodge. Thys was sentenced to ten years hard labour on the public works at Robben Island whilst Dikkop and Frederick, two of the independent non-Dutch speaking Khoikhoi, were released "without expense or injury".¹⁵⁸

It may be instructive, at this point, to compare and contrast the Roggeveld rebellion with that of Estienne Barbier.¹⁵⁹ Barbier was a remarkably literate man and written documents played a crucial part in the rebellion which he led even though many of his followers were themselves illiterate. There was no question of anonymity in the Barbier rebellion since virtually every insurrectionary statement could be traced back to an identifiable source - Barbier himself. Ultimately, this narrow, personal focus was probably responsible for the limited success and appeal of Barbier's rebellion. Would-be insurgents may have thought twice about joining a cause so intimately linked to the figure of a disgraced and outlawed sergeant. The close identification between Barbier, the man, and the issues which he championed also worked to the advantage of the authorities since it enabled them to target Barbier, rather than the real grievances, as the source of trouble. The transitivity of his message was also affected by his insistence on documenting his case with letters, written statements and proclamations. There was little room for ambiguity in Barbier's denouncements and public circulating letters couched, as they were, in semi-legalistic language. It is very likely that, by being too specific in some matters, Barbier limited his appeal. The authorities understood him only too well and by intercepting and restricting the flow of his documents prevented his message from reaching a wider contemporary audience (though not, paradoxically, from reaching posterity).

What sort of impact did the Roggeveld rebellion have? If the authorities hoped that the harsh punishments they meted out would have an exemplary effect and discourage future rebellions they were to be disappointed: they were already too late. The Roggeveld rebellion seems to have inspired a similar episode - though on a smaller scale - in the Hantam. As early as June 1772, in

158. Extract of the Journal, 31 Dec. 1772, and Abstract of Convictions before the Court of Justice in the Castle of the Cape of Good Hope, 1769-1782, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p.17 and pp.106-107.

159. See pp.102-126 above.

the very same letter in which *Landdrost* Faber reported the capture of the Roggeveld rebels to the governor, he noted that "another gang of Hottentots" had attacked the farmer Christian Bock in the Hantam.¹⁶⁰ The incident bore many resemblances to the attack on Teutman. The "hottentot Claas", who had resided with Bock for some time, together with some accomplices, attempted to set fire to Bock's house whilst he was sleeping. Despite the fact that poisoned arrows were fired at him Bock seized a gun and put his assailants to flight. Claas was eventually captured, flogged, branded, riveted in chains and sent to labour for life on Robben Island.¹⁶¹

Apart from this small flicker of sympathetic insurgency the Roggeveld rebellion seems to have had little impact outside of the Roggeveld. Like all pre-literate rural uprisings localism limited the boundaries of widespread, united action. This was particularly true in the vast, isolated terrain of the Roggeveld where, even today, human settlements are few and far between. Though the rebellion was crushed the conditions which caused it remained and were far from being localised. The situation of Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" servants, in fact, continued to worsen throughout the entire frontier zone. In these circumstances resistance, if not rebellion, was bound to be widespread and it manifested itself in desertion. Quite how many Khoikhoi servants joined the ranks of San resisters at this stage (thereby forsaking "secondary" for "primary" resistance) must remain unknown. But we must assume that, in some cases, the primary resistance of the San became merged with the secondary resistance of the Khoikhoi and resulted in what should properly be called Khoisan resistance. Certainly, after 1772, attacks against the *trekboers* were so intense that clearly a military crisis had arrived. Together with the already existing environmental crisis of the northern Cape frontier zone this would herald a new era: an era dominated by the institution of the commando.

160. Faber to Governor, 26 June 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, p. 13.

161. Ibid.; also Faber to Governor, 20 Oct. 1772 and Extract of the Journal 31 Dec. 1772, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part III, pp. 17-18.

Commandos and the San, c.1770-c.1800

PASTORALISM AND THE COMMANDO SYSTEM

The growing competition for, and deterioration of, the natural resources of the Cape interior had reached crisis proportions by the beginning of the 1770s. Conflict between colonial frontiersmen and the Khoisan was to rage unabated to the end of the century and was to have a profound effect on societies both within and beyond the colonial frontier. Indeed it is almost impossible to separate violence committed outside the boundaries of the colony from the violence which, increasingly, came to permeate relationships between colonists, "Bastaard-Hottentots" and Khoisan within the colony. The best way to focus on this interplay is to concentrate on the institution which linked the interior to the exterior and was, in itself, the most important institution of the frontier zone:¹ the commando.

Although the commando was ostensibly a military institution, designed for the defence of *trekboer* society and for the destruction of its foes, it came to play a vital role in the *trekboer* economy. The military power of the commando system served the essential purpose of enabling the pastoralist economy of the *trekboers* to expand. Without the ability to appropriate more land, water and grazing for the increasing flocks and herds of its members a pastoralist society is doomed to stagnation or decline. Without the means to protect livestock against predators, both human and animal, there could be no increase in the first place. At its most simple level, therefore, the commando was the military institution of a pastoralist society.²

The connections between commandos, pastoralism and the *trekboer* economy cannot, however, be dealt with so briefly. If we wish to understand why commandos became such an integral part of the *trekboer* economy, and what their exact role was within it, we need to consider the dynamics of pastoral production in closer detail. Only then will it become clear why it was that commandos played a structural part in the *trekboer* economy and only then will we be able to understand why the frontier zone was so violent.

1. It was Legassick who described the commando as the major institution of the open frontier zone. Legassick, "The northern frontier zone to 1820", in Elphick and Giliomee, (eds.), *Shaping*, 1st ed., p.247.

2. For a discussion of the relationship between the commando system and pastoralism see Penn, "Pastoralists and Pastoralism", p.66.

It is an important feature of nomadic pastoralism that production, apart from being primarily for subsistence, is based on the domestic unit, and that the distinctive form taken by the community is realised at the level of the domestic unit. In both Khoikhoi and *trekboer* societies the typical unit of production was the family group consisting of a man, his wife, unmarried children and perhaps some servants. Such a unit was basically a unit of kinship and its influence could be enlarged into a patrilineal extended family unit which included three generations within its nexus. Within such a domestic group there was a close correlation between the number of cattle or sheep a man could own and the availability of the labour (the size of his family) at his disposal. In other words in nomadic pastoralist societies the conditions of herd and family reproduction are parallel.³ Nomadic pastoralism requires labour for the control of selective breeding of the stock, for guarding the stock against thieves and predators, for watering it, milking it etc. Conversely the family or labourers are dependent on the reproduction of their stock for their subsistence. Thus fluctuations in the size of either a man's flock or family are crucial for the reproduction of both.

In order to guarantee this reproduction on the domestic level, notions of kinship and alliance are utilised by pastoralists but these involve the domestic group with other groups (particularly through marriage) and through them with the community as a whole. As Bonte says:

The reproduction of a domestic unit ultimately appears inseparable from that of the set of domestic units constituting a community. Or rather, the reproduction of domestic units is simultaneously the reproduction of the relations between these different units defining the form of community production.⁴

The community plays an essential role in acquiring natural resources for its composite group, resources which they would be incapable of acquiring for themselves and which are essential for the reproduction of the community as a whole. When conditions are favourable for the reproduction of both man and beast there is an increase in the size of both the family and the flocks and herds of the pastoralists. Since any given area of land has only a finite carrying capacity and resource range the need arises for more land to become available to the community. There is, however, no such thing as unoccupied land and the expansion of a pastoralist society is invariably at the expense of other groups, usually either pastoralists or hunter-gatherers. It is here that the larger social group achieves, by conquest, what the individual domestic groups could not achieve on their own.

3. Lefebure, "Nomadic Pastoralist Societies", p.3.

4. Bonte, "Non-stratified Social Formations", p.180.

This process of expansion is the effect of growth within the domestic units and for as long as growth continues there must be expansion. If expansion is not possible, the result would be tensions within the domestic units which would, in turn, alter the very basis of production. In pastoralist societies these tensions are shifted from the domestic level to the community level and become a political problem.⁵ The process of expansion is usually spearheaded by sons who find it necessary to leave the domestic group of their fathers because of the declining resources of the parent area, the increase of their own stock or simply the desire for independence. Even if a nomadic pastoralist society is not strong enough to conquer the territory of its neighbours, the institutionalisation of warfare and raiding is an essential mechanism for reducing tensions at the domestic level. There are some writers who regard warfare and raiding as being structural to nomadic pastoralist societies.⁶ Despite the fluctuating fortunes of war its institutionalisation allows elders to discipline younger men. If a raid is successful there is the prospect of increased herds, labour or even land. If a raid is unsuccessful at least it reduces some domestic tensions by reducing the number of sons. Participation in a war party is also seen as being an important rite of passage, whereby boys become men. Such patterns of raiding seem to have been the norm amongst the pre-colonial Khoikhoi and Smith has noted that the attempts of the VOC to interfere with this process was a contributory factor in the disruption of Khoikhoi society.⁷ Whatever balance of power had existed between Khoikhoi groups in different areas it was completely altered once the *trekboers*, a new and more powerful pastoralist society, arrived.

Some type of military organisation is thus crucial for the survival of a nomadic pastoralist society and it is obvious that the *trekboers* had developed their own: the commando. Though its origins were rooted in the requirements of pastoralist production it also had features which linked it to the three different modes of production found within the frontier zone. Thus, at its simplest level of organisation, the commando was based heavily on the kin structures inherited from the domestic groups. The leaders of the commando tended to be the heads or important members of large kinship groups who could rely on their strong economic and social status within the community, as well as a well developed system of kinship alliance, to mobilise the community.

The power of the commando system, however, far exceeded the potentials of a system based solely on kinship. It served both to entrench certain inequalities which existed within the domestic units of production and to create a dominated group which was completely excluded from the

5. Lefebure, "Nomadic Pastoralist Societies", p.9.

6. Bonte, "Non-stratified Social Formations", p.191.

7. A.B. Smith, "The Disruption of Khoi Society", p.18.

political sphere and subject to increasing exploitation. It is a commonly held belief that nomadic pastoralist societies are egalitarian since there is supposedly a rough economic and political equality between members of the society. As Lefebure points out, this alleged equality applies to heads of domestic units only and not to individuals like women, young men and servants. Moreover, a domestic unit which has more offspring (more labour), better leadership, or more capable family members within it, will not be the equal of a domestic group not similarly blessed.⁸ But even approximate parity between domestic units is altered once a politico-military system like the commando is established. Those groups which are able to exercise leadership within the commando are able to achieve far greater control over communal resources (grazing, water), livestock, and labour than weaker groups.⁹

Though such inequalities were enhanced by the commando system they were nothing compared to the inequalities which existed between the community from which the commando originated and those communities whose interests it did not represent. During the eighteenth century it became possible to speak of a dominating and a dominated class in the northern Cape and it was the commando that helped to structure these classes. Although one of the commando's functions was to conquer land for the expansion of *trekboer* society, its other function was to create and maintain conditions that were favourable for the extraction of surplus labour from those people whose land had been conquered. This was initially achieved through the exercise of power and domination - a political as opposed to an economic process - and the resultant relations of production may be described as being tributary. By this it is meant that the primary producers were left access to the means of production whilst tribute (in this case usually labour) was extracted from them by political or military means.

It has already been explained how it is possible for tributary relations of production to c.o.-exist with other relations of production within pastoralist societies and within an open frontier zone. It should not surprise us therefore to observe that domestic relations, slave relations, and relations whereby labour was remunerated either with services or in kind, even in cash, occurred simultaneously in the northern Cape frontier zone. As the frontier experienced increasing closure though, so too did the relations of production change and the Khoikhoi were increasingly divorced from the means of production.

8. Lefebure, "Nomadic Pastoral Societies", p.6.

9. Lefebure, "Nomadic Pastoral Societies", p.9; Bonte, "Non-stratified Social Formations", p.189.

Throughout the period under consideration the situation of the Khoisan deteriorated as the commando determined the truly vital issues - such as who owned the land and under what conditions, and who should labour for whom and under what circumstances. It was the commando that conquered grazing and water sources for the *trekboers*, that won or recaptured livestock, and that determined whether family labour was to be retained or appropriated by someone else. These issues were invariably decided to the detriment of the Khoisan for, with their largely kin-based structures and their lack of guns and horses, they were never able to develop an adequate response to the commando system. Firepower and horses had given the *trekboers* an overwhelming military advantage from the very beginning of their contact with their primitively armed and pedestrian competitors. As Goldschmidt notes: "It is difficult among pedestrian stock owners to establish a means of exploiting the labour of others on a mass scale".¹⁰ It was both Company and *trekboer* policy to ensure that guns, ammunition and horses remained a preserve of the colonists but in order to increase the strength of the commando, Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentot" and "Bastaard" auxiliaries were forced to undertake commando duty. Once such disaffected members of colonial society decided to use their skills and weapons against the *trekboers* the commando system ceased to be solely a colonial institution. In time, as we shall see, these extra-colonial commando groups would put an end to further *trekboer* expansion in the north-western regions of the frontier zone. It should also be noted that the privileged access which the *trekboers* had to the south-western Cape, with its commodities and agricultural products, also tipped the balance against the indigenous population who lacked such access.

In the early phase of frontier expansion we have seen how many of the Khoikhoi were deprived of their livestock through the most simple operation of primitive accumulation; namely, robbery. In these circumstances a colonist who allowed the head of a Khoikhoi domestic unit to retain his flocks and herds (already depleted by robbery and disease) would appear as akin to a benefactor. Such a colonist would, however, lay claim to the best pasturage and water resources of the area and the access to these would be denied to the Khoikhoi unless he and his followers were prepared to act as drovers or shepherds for the new master of the land. Initially, this arrangement had offered the Khoikhoi some security and even some wages. By the 1770s, however, with the institutionalisation of the commando, it became virtually impossible for the Khoikhoi to retain even a vestige of their own livestock since, with limited access to essential resources and decreasing control over the labour of their own family members (which was appropriated by the *trekboers*) their herds and flocks could no longer reproduce themselves. In addition the Khoikhoi

10. W. Goldschmidt, "A General Model for Pastoral Social Systems", in *L'équipe ecologie et anthropologie des Sociétés Pastorales*, (eds.), *Pastoral Production and Society*, p. 23.

found it increasingly difficult to extract either their wages or their original livestock from the protective custody of their masters. Even personal freedom of movement became more and more difficult as the *trekboers* prevented their Khoikhoi labourers from removing or withholding their labour or the labour of their families. In such circumstances the power a *trekboer* derived from his network of kin or commando members determined the amount of labour he could control and the degree of exploitation which he could bring to bear on that labour. It has been noted that by providing the colonists with livestock as well as supplying the labour required to manage it, the Khoikhoi occupied "a position for which there is hardly any parallel in colonial history".¹¹

The commando system, then, played a major role in determining the social and economic status of the various societies of the frontier zone, shaping and structuring the relationships which existed between the dominant and the dominated. It was not only Khoikhoi whom it forced into the position of unfree labour. Select members of the San societies which opposed the colonial advance were taken prisoner and placed as captives within the *trekboer* economy. Commandos also ensured the continued subservience of other categories of labour within the colony who might otherwise have rejected the conditions of their employment. "Bastaard-Hottentots" and slaves realised that commandos did not only operate beyond the borders of the colony but policed the populace within. The commando system was the institution through which colonial power was manifested and, more fundamentally, the institution which defined one's place within the colonial order.

In this regard 1774 is an important date, for it is the date of the General Commando, an event which marked the transition of the commando from being a rather *ad hoc* military response by frontier stock-farmers to being a fully fledged, government-approved system of colonial domination. It was during the 1770s that many of the characteristic structures and features of the commando were perfected. The details and events surrounding the General Commando are therefore of considerable interest for they ushered in a new era on the frontier and helped forge an institution which was to cast a long shadow across South African history. By focusing on the years surrounding and succeeding the General Commando it will be possible to illuminate many of the social, political and economic developments taking place in the frontier zone. Apart from anything else these years were also of crucial military significance and occupied the central place in what was, after all, a bloody and protracted frontier war. The responses of *trekboer*, Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentot" and San societies during the era of the General Commando are vital parts of

11. Neumark, *Economic Influences on the South African Frontier*, pp.175-6.

the story, for whether people chose to resist or collaborate with the commando system its transforming power could not be denied.

COLONIAL AUTHORITY AND THE GENERAL COMMANDO OF 1774

The intensified Khoisan resistance of the years 1770 to 1772 was most alarming and posed a considerable challenge to the existing commando system but, as long as the colonial frontier continued to advance, the crisis could be postponed. By 1772 it was clear, for both environmental and military reasons, that there could be no further colonial advance beyond the Hantam and the Roggeveld.¹² There was still, however, the possibility of expansion in a north-easterly direction and there was indeed a strong movement towards the east amongst the pioneers of the colonial frontier in the opening years of the 1770s. But this safety valve did not remain open for long.

By 1770 *trekboers* had entered the regions of the Camdeboo, Bruintjies Hoogte and the Fish River. As the authorities began to receive reports of the extent to which the colonists had advanced (and of their rather improper conduct in these remote regions) they began to take steps to contain further expansion in this direction.¹³ In this the government was motivated by its perennial desire for greater control over its subjects. It was well aware of the fact that the Xhosa lay to the east and wished to prevent the *trekboers* from entering their territory. If this were allowed to take place it would inevitably give rise to disputes over land and cattle. As it was, the Company was distressed to learn that substantial numbers of colonists had already been engaged in bartering cattle from the Xhosa, contrary to its strict edict of 1739, and that a well-beaten wagon track led from the district of Swellendam to Xhosa territory. Many colonists, furthermore, had been grazing their cattle in these distant parts without paying any rental to the Company for loan-farms. The government's response was to forbid any colonist from crossing the Gamtoos River and to repeat its previous prohibition, on pain of death, on bartering cattle from the Khoikhoi or Xhosa. The boundary between the districts of Stellenbosch and Swellendam was more clearly defined but no attempt was made to define the boundaries of the colony in either a northerly or north-easterly direction. Instead, the authorities approved of the occupation of the Camdeboo and of the mountains - dubbed the Bushman Mountains - which lay to the north-east. The reasoning behind this was that the area had "no other inhabitants than wild Bushmen and Hottentots, who possess no cattle, and who must subsist solely by the game in the fields, and

12. See chapter 5 above.

13. Report of Landdrosts and Commissioned Heemraden of Stellenbosch and Swellendam, 7 Feb. 1770, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111. pp.1-4.

therefore on that side also no evil is to be apprehended".¹⁴ Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Environmentally the areas beyond the Camdeboo - the Sneeu-berg and Bruintjies Hoogte - were far more attractive than the Karoo. The country was rich in grass and the colonial authorities might well have pondered why such a favourable region was devoid of either Khoikhoi or Xhosa pastoralists. The reason was that the San were stronger around the Sneeu-berg than they were in any other region of the Cape and the entry of *trekboers* into the region was to inaugurate the most violent period in the colony's history.¹⁵ This was not, however, apparent to the authorities in 1770 and they argued that since the colonists were bound to move there anyway the Company might as well be paid rental. Although Governor Tulbagh was sufficiently scrupulous to stipulate that only persons of good name and repute should be allowed to settle on the remote farms this was hardly an enforceable proviso and in no way guaranteed that conflict between the colonists and the San would be avoided.¹⁶ The entry of the *trekboers* into the Camdeboo had, in any event, coincided with the upsurge of Khoisan resistance in the Kou-ep, the Nieuweveld and the Roggeveld and the San of the Sneeu-berg can hardly have been unaware of the nature of the struggle further to the west. They can not have been well disposed to the entry of strangers into their territory and, as Colonel Collins perceptively noted in 1809, "the persons who were first obliged to seek a residence in such a country as Camdeboo, were destitute of the qualifications necessary to remove those unfavourable impressions".¹⁷

What Collins was suggesting was that it was a fairly hardened type of frontier farmer who dared to be at the expanding edge of the colonial frontier. Figures for loan-farm allocation in the Camdeboo and Sneeu-berg districts indicate that there was a considerable influx into these regions within a very short space of time. Between 25 May 1770 and 5 August 1773, 109 farms were granted in the Camdeboo and Sneeu-berg out of a total of 192 granted in the northern frontier zone as a whole.¹⁸ This invasion was not unopposed by the Swy-ep, the Sneeu-berg San, and by 1773 their resistance had prevented any further advances in the north-eastern sections of the northern frontier zone. The colonial frontier, as a whole, had ceased to advance whilst Khoisan resistance

14. Ibid; also Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.4-7. The height at the eastern end of the Bosjesmans Mountains became known as De Bruyns Hoogte - later Bruntjies Hoogte - after one of the boundary commissioners.

15. See chapter 5 above for details concerning the distribution of the Khoisan of the interior.

16. Extract of Resolution of Council, 13 Feb. 1770, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.5

17. Collins, Supplement to the relations of a Journey into the Country of the Bosjesman and Caffre People, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. V, p.9.

18. These figures are based on a study of the loan-farm records, CA, RLR 21-22.

had become so widespread and intense as to threaten the continued existence of the *trekboer* economy. The situation demanded extraordinary countermeasures.

Veldkorporaal Adriaan van Jaarsveld was one of those who had moved eastwards from the Koup in 1770. In April 1773 he reported from the Sneeu Berg that the attacks of the San had never before been as bad as they had been in the last eight months. He explained that the summer favoured the San, for the rains hindered the colonists by affecting their firepower and tracking abilities whilst making it unnecessary for the San to light tell-tale fires against the cold. Van Jaarsveld complained that losses in livestock had become intolerable to both the innermost and outermost farmers since no animals were ever recovered alive from a robbery, being found slaughtered instead. He urged that the colonists in his district be allowed to attack the San and destroy them in the winter, when they would be obliged to give away their positions by lighting fires.¹⁹ A similar request for action came from the Hantam and Roggeveld districts and on 28 December an important meeting of the combined Boards of the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* and the *Krygsraad* met to discuss the crisis.²⁰ The solution, it seemed, was to organise a commando of such magnitude and scale that it would crush all Khoisan resistance throughout the length and breadth of the northern frontier zone. It would be, if not total war, a general commando.

It was apparent that the *trekboers* of the frontier zone were relying on the authorities to provide them with the necessary support, in leadership and material, to put an end to Khoisan resistance. For their part the authorities did not question this objective for a moment and saw their function as being "to concert ...the measures whereby the said robberies of the Bosjesmans Hottentots might be resisted, those villains attacked upon all sides in their dens, and, if possible, reduced to a permanent peace".²¹ The implications of this are that the Company realised that its interests would best be served by the continued expansion of the *trekboer* frontier. There was no suggestion that the reasons for Khoisan resistance should be investigated. Instead the committee concerned itself with the practicalities of waging war and in organising a General Commando.

One of the first actions of the authorities was to appoint a supreme commander, or *veld commandant*, to lead the forthcoming commando. The man chosen was Rudolph Gottlieb

19. CA, Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 6127 Moodie's Lists of Official Documents, 1737-1837. Second Supplement to Papers relating to Bushmen. 1769-1785. Van Jaarsveld to Landdrost, 30 April 1773; see also Moodie, *The Record*, Pt.111, p.33. n.1. and p.65 n. 1.

20. CA, C 655 Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1771-1779, Combined Meeting of Landdrost and Heemraden, and Militia Officers, 28 Dec. 1773; also Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.19-20.

21. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.20.

Opperman who, despite the accusations which had been brought against him in 1750, was considered to embody "the necessary discretion and the greatest share of fitness and vigilance".²² It should be noted, however, that Opperman was chosen only after consultation with the other *veldkorporaals* and to this extent owed his appointment not so much to Company decree as to the approbation of his peers. No doubt he possessed "a due knowledge of the constitution of the country, the condition of the inhabitants and the character of the Hottentots" but these very virtues made him a frontiersman rather than a Company man.²³

The question of leadership on the General Commando serves to highlight one of the central paradoxes of the commando system in the late eighteenth century: at the same time as the state sought to exercise greater control over the frontier zone, through the organisation and provision of commandos, it was obliged to surrender substantial power to local commando leaders. In the early years of the eighteenth century commando leaders were appointed by the VOC from officers of the garrison. But as the Company lost control over the ever-expanding frontier, the commando leaders, though appointed by the Company, were drawn from amongst the frontier farmers themselves.²⁴ The Company simply acknowledged the existing leader of a frontier community.

The Company had always regarded the colonists as being eligible for military service and in times of war it was envisaged that the burghers would rally to the defence of the state. The principle of compulsory annual military drill in Cape Town or Stellenbosch, with target practice and weapons inspection, should remind us that, initially, the early colonists had been discharged Company soldiers who owed the duty of military service to their government.²⁵ Developments in the colony might have led to the unexpected situation whereby the Company was having to come to the aid of the colonists (rather than the other way round) but at least structures of command and habits of obedience were in place. With the resources and authority of the state behind it the commando system could deliver far more power than a system of local defence based solely on kinship ties. The trouble was that once this system was placed in the hands of a local farmer he gained power, often at the Company's expense. Whoever controlled the commando became immensely influential for he could dispense vital supplies of gun-powder and shot or allocate captives as labourers. The commando leader could also enforce attendance on a commando or demand provisions from non-participants. The area of operation and the time and duration of the campaign were also

22. See chapter 5 above for Opperman's 1750s escapades.

23. CA, C 655, Meeting of Combined Boards, 28 March 1774; also Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.22-23.

24. See chapter 2 above for details concerning early commandos at the Cape; also Roux, "Verdedigingstelsel", pp.129-58.

25. Roux, pp. 50-55, 64-65.

leadership decisions. Clearly the potential existed for a local commando leader to become a law unto himself. Increasingly, this potential would be realised, though there were very real local constraints on the powers of commando leaders as well as on the power of the government.²⁶

This became apparent when the proposed unitary leadership of the General Commando was undermined by the sheer vastness of the area of operations. The available force of 250 men had to be divided into three separate units to campaign in three different areas under three different leaders. The first, under Opperman, was to operate from the districts of the Swartenberg, Camdeboo, Sneeuberg, Nieuweveld and Koup. The second was to operate from the Middle and Klein Roggeveld and the Bokkeveld under the command of the *veldkorporaals* Nicolaas van der Merwe and Pieter Jacobs. The third was to operate from the Onder Bokkeveld, the Hantam, the Groot Roggeveld and the Olifants River under the *veldkorporaals* Gerrit van Wijk and Willem Steenkamp.²⁷

It was also evident that leadership of a commando was not always a sought-after position. The impending General Commando and the prospect of hard work and danger prompted many of the thirteen *veldkorporaals* to tender their resignations.²⁸ Their office often exposed them to danger and required them to marshal their subordinates for commando duty - not always a popular task. Whilst this could enhance a man's local standing it could also make him unbearably unpopular. With this in mind the *Landdrost*, *Heemraden* and *Krygsraad* officers suggested promoting the *veldkorporaals* to the rank of *veldwagtmeester* or sergeant. Along with this promotion, however, went increased responsibility as the *veldwagtmeesters* were expected to submit biannual reports to the *commandant* (himself promoted to the rank of *cornet*) and triannual reports to the *landdrost* on the number of men in their district, the changes of residence that might occur, the number of young men eligible for military drill at the Cape and, in general, all that might be of interest in their district.²⁹

It may be seen from the above that the Company hoped to use the General Commando, and its essential co-ordinating role therein, to impose its authority throughout the frontier districts. In the long run such control was beyond the Company's reach for the structures of command that were created served to bolster the authority of the *veldwagtmeesters* and reduce that of the distant

26. See especially chapter 9 below for the example of how Petrus Pienaar used the office of *veldwagtmeester* to achieve his goals.

27. CA, C 655, Meeting of the Combined Boards, 28 March 1774; Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.22-23.

28. CA, C 655, 20 Dec. 1774 and 4 April 1775.

29. CA, C 655, 28 March 1774.

administration. The Company's one trump card was its control of the ammunition supply, though it could hardly withhold supplies of powder and shot from its beleaguered subjects.³⁰ By the 1770s it had become evident that if cheap supplies of meat were to continue to reach Cape Town then the *trekboers* had to be supported in their struggle against the Khoisan. Ultimately, the Company had no option but to attempt to strengthen the position of the frontier farmers by increasing the efficiency of the commando system. The more successful they were, however, the more likely were the farmers to resent government interference.

THE SAN AND THE COMMANDOS

Although the commando affected the existence of all of the societies of the frontier zone it is true to say that its affect was greatest on those societies which it regarded as being its principal enemy: the San. Even though the ranks of the San were indeed augmented with Khoikhoi resisters this should not obscure the fact that, after 1740, the great brunt of commando activity fell upon societies which were, primarily, those of hunter-gatherers. Whilst it is important to realise that there are instances where it is probably more correct to speak of Khoisan resistance it is also important to acknowledge that a great many of the inhabitants of the arid Cape interior - "Bushmanland" - were indeed San. No useful purpose will be served by treating all resistance as Khoisan resistance and ignoring the great differences which existed between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. The principal antagonists of the commando era were the *trekboers* and the San. The section which follows attempts to discuss some of the aspects of the bitter struggle which developed between them.

The preparations for the General Commando are significant because of the light which they throw on the "Bushman" policy of the time. This had an important bearing on the treatment of San labourers for the instructions issued to the General Commando were that those San resisters who were not "reduced either to a permanent peace and tranquillity or otherwise entirely subdued and destroyed" were to be taken captive. Initially it was ordered that women and defenceless males should be spared - the women being released and the young and adult males being given to the poorest colonists for a "fixed and equitable term of years". In practice, however, very few adult males were ever taken alive and, moreover, it was argued that it was heartless to release widows and orphan children. They were to be incorporated into the labour force and the only stipulation was that they were to be treated the same as "the other free Hottentots who have entered the

30. In fact, the British government of 1795 was the first administration of the Cape to withhold ammunition from colonists, in this case in order to suppress burgher rebellions in Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet.

service of our inhabitants for hire", and that they were not to be maltreated, "(as has more than once happened with many) and thus excited to wicked revenge".³¹

Captive San were not, as it transpired, treated like other "free Hottentots" but more like "ingeboekte Bastaard-Hottentots". Their names and particulars were supposed to be entered in special rolls and most were to work for their masters until they were eighteen years of age.³² The surviving rolls date from 1776 to 1803 and list a total of 258 child captives officially recorded during this period. These figures need to be regarded as quite inadequate for there were many more San who were captured by colonists during these years of intense commando activity than are recorded here. The General Commando alone took 289 captives and in any given year individual commandos would admit to taking far more captives than the numbers entered in the *landdrost's* lists.³³ It is not too difficult to see that the initial intention of treating captive San as "free" Khoikhoi was yet another casualty of the realities of commando warfare. But nor should it be supposed that the commando simply proposed to extirpate the San. Even from this early statement of policy it may be seen that, from the General Commando onwards, commandos would have twin objectives in mind: the crushing of opposition and the acquisition of labour. The *trekboers* had been given *carte blanche* to pursue their own interests. They could either sweep the Khoisan out of their path or incorporate them into their economy as unfree labourers.³⁴

In so far as competition for land was an issue, the instructions issued to the General Commando were that those San who were disposed to make peace should be "given" "as many farms or tracts of country as, without too great injury to our own inhabitants, they may require for themselves or for pasture for their cattle".³⁵ This detail, apart from being one of the earliest examples of official "native land policy", reveals that the Company was aware that not all of the resisters were cattleless San. It also reveals how broad and vague were the powers being granted to the

31. CA, C 655, 19 April 1774.

32. CA, I/STB 18/196.

33. For example, between 1787 and 1788, in the eastern districts alone, commandos captured 112 San (see p.248 below). In the "Bosjesmans" lists, however, a mere 2 are listed for 1787 and 11 for 1788.

34. There was a lively debate between those, like Dr. John Philip, who saw the instructions to the General Commando (and later orders of the Council of Policy referring to the "extirpation" of the San) as being an order for the extermination of the San and those, like Moodie, who saw the documents as being more contradictory and nuanced. Whatever might have been said, however, in practice the commandos took captives in order to create unfree labourers. This is a point made quite clearly by Miklos Szalay, *Ethnologie und Geschichte: Zur Grundlegung einer ethnologischen Geschichts-schreibung mit Beispielen aus der Geschichte der Khoi-San in Sudafrika* (Berlin, 1983), pp.196-198. For the debate between Philip and Moodie see Robert Ross, "Donald Moodie and the Origins of South African Historiography", in R. Ross, *Beyond The Pale* (Johannesburg, 1994), pp.196-208.

35. CA, C 655, 19 April 1774.

trekboers to satisfy their own needs. The stated objective of the commando was to re-establish the colonists in "their" possessions and to maintain them, if necessary, by "de sterke hand". It was hoped that amicable peace negotiations would occur for assorted trinkets were to be taken along as well as the copper-headed staffs of office that the Company customarily dispensed to subjugated kraal captains. More ominously, leg-shackles and hand-cuffs were also issued. If the San were not disposed to accept peace proposals, "and should necessity thus demand that they should be entirely subdued and destroyed" it was permissible to:

attack and slay them in such a cautious manner, however, that our own inhabitants may be as little as possible exposed to danger, and not rashly led to slaughter; and also that no blood shall be spilled without absolute necessity, and that as much as shall be by any means possible, the women and defenceless males shall be spared.³⁶

The three sections of the General Commando left, as planned, between August and September in 1774. These months had been chosen as most suitable for the campaign because in the summer there was not enough rain (an indication that most of the *veldwagtmeesters* came from winter rainfall areas) whilst in the winter it was too cold and many rivers were impassable. The situation in the Sneeuberg had become even more critical than the year before and Van Jaarsveld had reported in June that the colonists there were on the point of abandoning the area because of the incessant San attacks. He explained that if the Sneeuberg were abandoned the Camdeboo would have to be abandoned as well because the thick bush of the latter region provided excellent cover for the San. The best place to fight was therefore in the Sneeuberg and in order to prevent morale-sapping retreats from the district the *trekboers* had compensated for individual stock losses by a system of group subscription. This policy of community assistance, though sorely tested in the years ahead, was to be the mainstay of the Sneeuberg farmers as they bore the brunt of San resistance.³⁷

The first section of the General Commando to leave was that which was under the command of Nicolaas van der Merwe. It left the Bokkeveld with twenty-seven Europeans and thirty-eight Khoikhoi on 16 August. The commando searched the Middle and Klein Roggeveld but went as far east as the Koup and Nieuweveld mountains and as far north as the Sak River. It returned to the Bokkeveld on 7 November having destroyed seventeen kraals, killed one hundred and forty-

36. Ibid.

37. Van Jaarsveld to Opperman, 2 June 1774; Van Jaarsveld to Opperman, 20 June 1774, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. III, p. 33, n. 1; pp. 65-66, n. 2; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, p.12.

two people and captured eighty-nine. Only one commando member was killed, dying nine days after being hit by a poisoned arrow.³⁸

The second section, under the leadership of Gerrit van Wyk, assembled at the Vis River in the Roggeveld on 2 September and proceeded to search the region to the north and north-east of the Sak River, i.e. Bushmanland. This commando consisted of at least thirty-one Europeans and a slightly greater number of Khoikhoi. They killed ninety-six San and captured twenty-one. None of this commando's members was killed though a "Bastaard" had come close to death when an arrow pierced his hat.³⁹

The third section, under Opperman, left to crush resistance in the Sneeuwberg, Camdeboo, Nieuweveld and Koup. It killed two hundred and sixty-five San and captured one hundred and twenty-nine. Some of the commando members, including Opperman himself, were wounded but none fatally.⁴⁰

A closer analysis of these facts and figures is in order for the high ratio of killed to captured needs to be explained, particularly in view of the Company's instructions that no blood should be spilt without necessity. The insignificant number of colonial casualties also has to be accounted for. Similar body-count, casualty and captive ratios were common to nearly all subsequent commandos and in this respect the General Commando proved to be typical rather than exceptional. Most of those captured were women and children. It would seem that the majority of captives, who were given as labourers to colonial masters, were children under the age of twelve.⁴¹ The women were either released or given as wives to the Khoikhoi commando members. Very few men were captured and the inescapable conclusion is that they were killed. Why?

In most cases the commandos attacked individual kraals. If one analyses the figures given by Nicolaas van der Merwe it can be seen that the average number of people per kraal was just over thirteen (13.3). The smallest group consisted of six people and the largest of thirty. This is in conformity with an estimate, based on group portraits in the rock art of the south-western Cape,

38. Report of the Field-Commandant Nicolaas van der Merwe, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp. 35-37.

39. Journal of the Commando under the Orders of Gerrit van Wyk, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.37-38.

40. Extract from Journal Colonial Office, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.40.

41. See for instance the list of San captives with their ages and the name of the commando member with whom they are to be placed, which is signed by Nicolaas van der Merwe and dated 1 January 1775, addressed from the Bokkeveld. For some reason, however, it is filed in CA, 1/STB 10/162, Veldwachmeesters Rapporten Over Boschesmans Rooveryen, 1785-1793.

of the average group size of a hunter-gatherer band.⁴² What this meant in military terms, however, was that a commando always enjoyed a numerical advantage. Thanks to their Khoikhoi scouts and spies, commandos nearly always achieved the additional advantage of surprise through dawn attacks on sleeping encampments. There was, also, the inestimable advantage of firearms over stone age weapons and of horses over the unmounted. In these circumstances one would have expected rapid surrender but it became a commonplace of the frontier that the San "have never been known to demand quarter in any situation".⁴³ The journal kept by the commando under Gerrit van Wijk is undramatically explicit on this point. Because of the open nature of the country in which Van Wijk's commando operated it was less easy to take the San by surprise for they took refuge amongst rocky koppies and:

17 Sept...they shot briskly arrows and would not come out when called; shot five and took a child. 22 Sept...the Bushmen having ensconced themselves behind the fence of a kraal, shot Gerrit Bastert Minie through the hat, therefore shot 8; they would accept no peace...the commandant marched up to the first fire that was perceived, and had them called out to make peace, but instead of answering they shot their arrows, therefore shot 10.⁴⁴

Attempts to find kraal captains with whom to negotiate a peace met with very little success, partly because the San did not have "captains" in the sense understood by the Europeans and partly because of a deep-rooted determination to reject unequal terms. Nicolaas van der Merwe did manage to persuade a certain Joris, from a kraal at the Sak River, to accept a staff of office but only after he had been captured.⁴⁵ Gerrit van Wijk was unable to find any captains to negotiate with him since they had all fled into a part of the interior where, for lack of water, his commando could not follow. Opperman "appointed two Hottentots, who evinced a peaceful disposition, Captains over their kraals, giving each of them a copper-headed staff, and presenting them with some beads, copper rings and some pounds of tobacco". But peace was not to be bought so easily and Opperman must surely have found it ominous that he had to give over to Adriaan van Jaarsveld a prisoner whom he would have appointed as kraal captain "but he replied that he dared not undertake it, as his tribe would kill him".⁴⁶

42. T. Maggs, "Some Observations on the Size of Human Groups During the Late Stone Age", in M. Schoonraad, (ed.), *Rock Paintings of Southern Africa. South African Journal of Science, Special Issue 2*, 1971, pp.49-53.

43. Collins, Report on the Bosjesmen, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. V, p. 33.

44. Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p. 37.

45. Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.37 and 40.

46. Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, pp.37-38, n. pp. 38-39 and p. 40.

In most cases, therefore, San men spurned offers of peace and fought to the death, frequently displaying incredible heroism. "When a horde is surrounded by the farmers, and little chance is perceived by them of effecting an escape, they will fight it out most furiously so long as a man shall be left alive" wrote an emissary to the Snecuberg San in 1797.

It frequently happens on such occasions that a party will volunteer the forlorn hope, by throwing themselves in the midst of the colonists in order to create confusion, and to give to their countrymen, concealed among the rocks or in the long grass, at the expense of their own lives, an opportunity of exercising more effectually their mortal weapons upon their enemies, and at the same time to facilitate the escape of their wives and children.⁴⁷

The question, however, remains: what was it that provoked such suicidal resistance? On one level the intensity of resistance was probably a function of the desperate situation of the San. They must have realised that if they lost their country to the colonists their way of life was doomed. The more we learn about San culture the more evident it becomes that there was a profoundly spiritual connection between particular places and the systems of meaning that the San had constructed in order to explain their world. The stories, myths and legends which are contained in the Bleek-Lloyd archives bear testimony to the fact that the San's narrative representations of reality were, in some ways, evoked by the landscape itself. Thus, to lose the land was to lose, literally, everything.⁴⁸ On a more mundane level the San were already fighting in territory where the environmental balance was critical and where retreat could result in an irreplaceable loss of resources. The prospect of trekking into increasingly arid areas, or entering the hostile territory of Tswana or Xhosa societies, was unappealing. The Xhosa, in particular, were unlikely to accommodate refugee San. "What happens to a Bosjesman-Hottentot who is captured by a Hottentot or a Caffer?" asked a Capetonian of a frontiersman in the 1770s. "Is he killed or must he work as a slave?". "They kill him, otherwise he would again run away" was the reply.⁴⁹

47. Barrow, *Travels*, p. 286.

48. W.H.I. Bleek and L. Lloyd, Unpublished Manuscripts, 1866-1877, BC 151, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town. The best guides to the symbolism and significance of this material is R.L. Hewitt, *Structure, Meanings and Ritual in the narratives of the Southern San* (Hamburg, 1986) and J.D. Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic meanings in Southern San rock art* (London, 1981). On the San sense of place see John Parkington, "///Kabbo's father's father's place it was: Perceptions of /Xam hunter-gatherers" in P. Skotnes, (ed.), *Sound From The Thinking Strings*. See also J. Deacon, "My Place is the Bitterpits", *African Studies*, 45: 2, 137-155. Bruce Chatwin's novel *The Songlines* (London, 1987) explores the way in which landscape and legend, story and song are interconnected in Aboriginal systems of thought.

49. G.J. Schutte, (ed.), *Briefwisseling Van Swellengrebel*, p.311.

It would be wrong to dismiss this observation concerning the relationship between Xhosa and San as being simply the inaccurate exaggeration of an ignorant *trekboer*. The colonists themselves thought that it was extremely difficult to keep a male San captive.

Such as have been taken very young and well treated, have turned out most excellent servants; they have shown great talent, great activity, and great fidelity. An opposite treatment has been productive of a contrary effect; and the brutal conduct of most of the Dutch farmers towards those in their employ has already been noticed. The poor Hottentot bears it with patience, or sinks under it; but on the temper and the turn of mind of the Bosjesman it has a very different effect. He takes the first opportunity that offers of escaping to his countrymen, and contrives frequently to carry off with him a musquet, powder and ball. With tales of cruelty he excites them to revenge; he assists them in their plans of attack; tells them the strength of the whole, and of individuals; the number of their cattle, and the advantages and dangers that will occur in the attempt to carry them off; the manner in which expeditions are conducted against them; and, in short, every thing he knows respecting the colonists.⁵⁰

These perceptions of the unsuitability of San males as captive labourers, shared by both Xhosa and colonists, draw attention to the ancient animosity which existed between pastoralists (or agro-pastoralists) and hunter-gatherers.⁵¹ The San probably expected, and in many cases received, death rather than captivity from the *trekboers* who, in common with other pastoralist societies, would have found it impossible to force hostile hunter-gatherers into becoming herders against their will. Opportunities for escape and a return to the wild were too numerous. This is not to say that the San were incapable of working as herders for pastoralists (the Tswana, for instance, had San servants) but that it was not possible to force them to become pastoralists - except where the environment was so harsh (such as the Kalahari) as to jeopardise their continued existence altogether if they failed to submit to the demands of the dominant society.⁵² Nor should the difficulties in making such a transition, even voluntarily, be minimised. It was not a case of making a simple economic adjustment but of being wrenched from a beloved homeland, losing one's kin and abandoning an ancient culture with its distinctive social and political systems.⁵³

50. Barrow, *Travels*, p.236.

51. For an extensive discussion of this topic see Pieter Jolly, "Strangers to Brothers: Interaction between South-Eastern San and Southern Nguni/Sotho Communities" (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1993).

52. For relationships between the Tswana and the San see Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*; Barry Morton, "Servitude, Slave-Trading and Slavery in the Kalahari", in Eldredge and Morton (eds.), *Slavery in South Africa: Captive Labor on the Dutch Frontier* (Boulder, 1994), pp.215-50.

53. This is not to suggest that the San were incapable of reacting to opportunities outside of the field of hunting and gathering. Wilmsen (see note above) and Rob Gordon, in *The Bushman Myth* (Chicago, 1993) have shown the San to be more adaptable than the simple stereotypical primitives of popular preconception. But Andrew B. Smith's work (see p.22, n.62 above), which stresses the difficulty of the transition from hunting and gathering to

The possibility exists, therefore, that many male San were never given the chance to surrender but were shot because, unlike the Khoikhoi, they had no economic role to play in the *trekboer* economy. Women, once they had lost the protection of their men folk, could be incorporated into the *trekboer* economy either directly, as domestic drudges, or indirectly, by becoming the wives of Khoikhoi servants. Children, especially infants, were even more tractable and could be brought up to accept the life of an enslaved herder.⁵⁴ In this case the term "slave" is perhaps not as anachronistic as it would be elsewhere. By exterminating the parent society of a San child the *trekboers* had achieved those necessary preconditions of enslavement: social death and natal alienation. Captive children in this condition could be "given" by one colonist to another, or even "ordered" as items to be acquired from commandos going into the field.⁵⁵ The *landdrost* of Stellenbosch himself, Hendrik Bletterman, was "given" two San children in April 1794 and another, by *Veldwagtmeester* Willem Adriaan Nel, in November.⁵⁶ There are no records of money changing hands for such "gifts" though this does not mean that it did not happen. Still, in the absence of a legal, visible market for San captives, it would be wrong to regard every commando as a *razzia*.

The casualty lists of the General Command indicate that heartless attitudes towards the San were already in place but the escalating violence of the frontier led to even greater inhumanity before the century's end. San men were eventually perceived of as a type of vermin, fit only for extermination, but even women and children were expendable.⁵⁷ Nicolaas van der Merwe, for instance, did not think it unreasonable during the course of the General Commando to order

pastoralism, cannot be ignored. We should also note the crucial importance of context. The life and death struggle in the eighteenth century Cape frontier zone was very different from the less intense forms of interaction in nineteenth or twentieth century Botswana or Namibia.

54. Joshua Penny, a press-ganged American sailor, deserted from the British navy at the Cape shortly after the British conquest of 1795 and fled to the Koue Bokkeveld. Here he lived amongst the farmers for several months. In his slightly unreliable memoirs he recounts having accompanied a Koue Bokkeveld commando in 1796. After a three week march the colonial force, "40 men exclusive of 50 or 60 Hottentots", attacked a San kraal. Once the shooting had stopped the colonists "found in the hostile camp twenty or thirty dead bodies, and a woman with nine children. The woman was shot, because no prisoner can be admitted into any settlement, over the age of eleven years ... We returned to Cold Bokkeveld with the nine captive children in baskets, slung on the oxen by a girth which passed round the bodies five or six times, and drawn taut by two Hottentots". *The Life And Adventures Of Joshua Penny* (New York, 1815, reprint Cape Town, 1982), pp.20-21.

55. See for instance p.247 below.

56. CA, I/STB 18/196, Miscellaneous lists bound in with Bosjesmans lists. It is interesting to speculate whether Nel's gift was a bribe for he was in great disfavour with the *landdrost* at this time. See chapter 9, p.350 below.

57. See Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, pp.58-65.

wounded San women and children to be shot "in order that their death might not be still crueller".⁵⁸ In 1797 Barrow related how:

A boor from Graaff Reynet being asked in the secretary's office, a few days before we left the town, if the savages were numerous or troublesome on the road, replied, he had only shot four, with as much composure and indifference as if he had been speaking of four partridges. I myself have heard one of the humane colonists boast of having destroyed with his own hands near three hundred of these unfortunate wretches.⁵⁹

It was not, however, merely the San's perceived lack of economic utility that provoked such cruelty towards them from the *trekboers*. The colonists had never had a high opinion of the Khoikhoi, whom they regarded as being far below themselves in civilised accomplishments, and they were even less likely to admire a people who seemed to live almost completely in a "wild" state.⁶⁰ To European observers the San seemed to possess neither property, political structures, religion, houses, literacy, decency or even an intelligible language. Somatically, too, they were as far removed from the European norm as any people the Dutch had ever encountered. Conscious of the achievements of their own nation, and imbued with a sense of their own superiority under God's guidance, it was hardly surprising that the colonists should imagine the San to be completely "other" than themselves.⁶¹ Fear, contempt, hatred and the almost unrestrained licence to violence, provided by the context of a legitimate war on the furthest frontiers of European expansion, ensured that the war against the San would be marked by genocidal atrocities.

58. Extracts from the Records of the Board of Landdrost and Militia Officers Stellenbosch, 13 June 1775, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.41-42. Van der Merwe's actions were considered to have been quite reasonable by the *landdrost* and officers of Stellenbosch, so reasonable, in fact, that his accuser, A.G. Schombie, was ordered to pay a fine of ten Rijksdaalders to "prevent the zeal and public spirit of the Field Corporals from being damped".

59. Barrow, *Travels*, p. 85.

60. The attitude of colonists towards the Khoikhoi is best inferred from the remarks of visitors to the Cape and from the evidence of mundane archival documents. There are no great colonial discourses (in the sense of discourses written by colonists) on the eighteenth century Khoikhoi. The works of Kolbe, Mentzel, Thunberg, Sparrman, Le Vaillant and Barrow are those of learned outsiders looking in. They reflect, no doubt, some of the colonial attitudes towards the Khoikhoi but are also shaped by the assumptions of the discourse of the Enlightenment. Even Gordon, who lived in the Cape for over twenty years, was more of an Enlightenment man than a typical colonist. (On this point see N. Penn, "Getting his Measure", review of Patrick Cullinan's *Robert Jacob Gordon 1743-1795*, in *S. A. Literary Review*, Vol. 2, no. 4, Dec. 1992, pp. 10-12). The extent to which colonists, especially those on the frontier, were aware of the Enlightenment, remains to be established. We may assume, however, that they had retained ideas about "the other" which had been prevalent in European society since the middle ages.

61. See M. Guenther, "From 'Brutal Savages' to 'Harmless People': Notes on the changing Western image of the Bushmen", *Paideuma*, 26, 1980, pp. 123-40.

The nature of the war waged against the San should not, however, lead us into believing that they were passive, unsuspecting victims of colonial aggression. The General Commando was, after all, an attempt to crush a most threatening and no doubt concerted campaign of resistance. Nor was this resistance overcome by the General Commando. Although the great number of casualties suffered by the San and the negligible losses suffered by the colonists would seem to suggest that the commando had been an overwhelming colonial success this was not, in fact, the case. The struggle was far from decided and for many years the colonists were unable to find a military solution to the most effective guerrilla war that was being waged against them. A repeat of the General Commando would prove to be both impractical and impossible since San resistance was too widespread to be snuffed out in one fell swoop. Nor were the *ad hoc* commandos raised by aggrieved farmers and local *veldwagmeesters* an adequate response. At best such commandos could hope to recover the stolen livestock and kill the people responsible for the robbery, but complete success was rare because of the tactics employed by the San.

For the most part the San chose to attack at night, sometimes killing the Khoikhoi or slave shepherds and drovers who guarded the livestock. Reports of the cruelties which San were capable of inflicting on their victims may not all be colonial propaganda for it would be naive to think that the San would never have retaliated in kind to the atrocities inflicted upon them.⁶² During the day the attackers would have to wait until the guard fell asleep or was overcome by the excessive use of tobacco or dagga - apparently a common occurrence - before creeping up and killing him.⁶³ Increasingly there were attacks on the farmhouses or persons of the colonists themselves, but these were dangerous targets. Far more vulnerable were the sheep and cattle of the frontiersmen. It was reported that the San urged the livestock away by waving lion skins about, the scent of which caused the animals to flee precipitously.⁶⁴ Their destination was usually higher or drier areas of the interior where the horses of the pursuing commando would find it difficult to follow. Many a commando had to turn back because of lack of water for the horses or because the trail they were following disappeared in the stony mountains. The San were not hampered to the same extent by the scarcity of water for their stolen livestock. Their objective was not to conserve the stock, but to consume it at their leisure in a secure place. If they thought

62. The normally sympathetic Barrow reports thus: "Should they seize a Hottentot guarding his master's cattle, not contented with putting him to immediate death, they torture him by every means of cruelty that their invention can frame, as drawing out his bowels, tearing off his nails, scalping, and other acts equally savage". *Travels*, p. 286.

63. These, and other details concerning San tactics, may be found in Collins' Report on the Bosjesmen, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part. V, pp. 33-34. Many other writers, however, describe the resistance of the San, for example Barrow, *Travels*, pp.286-287; V.S. Forbes, (ed.), *Anders Sparrman: A Voyage To The Cape Of Good Hope...1772-1776*, 2 vols., (Cape Town, 1975), Vol. 2, pp.110-111; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.57-66.

64. Collins, Report, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part. V, p. 33.

they were in danger of being overtaken they would kill or maim the animals so as to deny them to the *trekboers*. By stealing animals they were not trying to set themselves up as pastoralists - for the most part an impossibility in their environment - but striking the colonists where they were most vulnerable.⁶⁵

On an open plain, mounted commando members could keep a distance of a hundred to a hundred and fifty paces between them and their targets, dismount, and fire with fatal effect, well out of effective range of the San's arrows. It was estimated that a San could fire between five or six arrows a minute with accuracy up to eighty paces.⁶⁶ The advantages which horses gave to the *trekboers* made horses a prime target and the San killed them whenever they could. Collins reported, however, that by 1809 the San of the Bamboes Berg had learnt how to use horses for pursuing eland and other game but that the San of Bushmanland had still not adopted the practice.⁶⁷ Mountains offered the San a refuge place which nullified the power and speed of the dreaded horses. From their vantage points on high the San could spy the approach of a commando and take evasive action. Sometimes they would roll boulders down upon their enemies. If the worst came to the worst and the San had to fight, they preferred to do so from behind boulders or caves fortified with stone walls. Their poisoned arrows were not a match for muskets and the colonists protected themselves by wearing thick clothing or advancing behind a screen of animal hides. Nonetheless, few farmers relished the idea of advancing against a hidden enemy and dying a long, agonising death by poison.⁶⁸ Usually they sent their Khoikhoi auxiliaries to prise the San out of their strongholds. The safest tactic of all was the dawn ambush of a sleeping kraal. Here again the skills of Khoikhoi commando members were invaluable since it was they who were most adept at tracking the San whilst themselves remaining unseen.

Both sides in the struggle came to gauge each other's strengths and weaknesses as the century progressed. The San soon realised when horse sickness had crippled the offensive capacity of their foes and became especially bold at such times. Periods of drought forced the San to steal from the colonists' livestock in order to survive, but drought was also a good time to attack because of the difficulties of keeping a commando in the field. Periods of rain, on the other hand, washed away the livestock's spoor and caused the colonists' muskets to misfire. The colonists

65. The San preference for consuming livestock almost at once, rather than tending it, is very well attested to in the records and suggests that the San were not simply proto-pastoralists who would have been Khoikhoi if only they had had cattle. See the references cited in note 63 above for some examples.

66. Forbes, *Sparman*, Vol. 2, pp. 111-112 and n. 10.

67. Collins, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. V, p. 3.

68. See Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp. 246-250 for a description of the San's bows, arrows and poisons.

liked to campaign in early spring. There was good grazing for their horses in most areas and if it was cold the San often gave away their position by lighting fires. Farmers in the winter rainfall areas would have ploughed and planted their crops and were therefore free to wage war. In the winter it was too cold and wet for such farmers to relish commando duty. Roggeveld farmers frequently had to trek out of their region to escape the extreme cold and at such times the San broke into their abandoned farmhouses. Surprisingly they seldom burnt the houses but confined themselves, for the sake of warmth, to burning any furniture that might have been left behind.⁶⁹

Actions such as these suggest that, in the end, the defeat of the San owed as much to the inadequacy of their system of representation as it did to the military superiority of the colonists. There was, in fact, a remarkably long period of military stalemate when the *trekboers* were, if anything, on the retreat. The effectiveness of the San's guerrilla tactics in this respect cannot be doubted. What is more debatable, however, is whether the San were ever able to conceptualise, adequately, the nature of the forces that were overwhelming them.⁷⁰ The stories and myths of the /Xam, which were collected by Bleek and Lloyd, suggest an essentially ahistorical understanding, where events and things were fitted into a conceptual grid of essentially mythic significance. Theirs was a reality which included dreams, trance, out of body travel, therianthropic forms, spirit possession and shamanistic powers. Ancient stories had great explanatory power. Certain animals had magical properties and were much easier to understand than strange white men. "They think we are lions", said Gordon, and here we should understand that sorcerers who worked evil at night were thought to assume the form of lions.⁷¹ None of this is meant to imply that the San's mental universe was inferior to, or more absurd than, that of a Dutch frontier farmer. It is merely to say that the focused drive of the Europeans, with a cluster of concepts based upon Christian certainties and a notion of power which derived from material gain, proved to be of greater utility, in the long struggle for survival on the Cape frontier, than a world view

69. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.448-449.

70. My argument here, though sketchily drawn, is influenced by Todorov's explanation for the defeat of the Aztecs by the Spanish. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York, 1984).

71. "They say we are evil and come in the night like wolves, and have hair like lions". Gordon, 12 Nov. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.194; Lions were naturally feared predators who were seen as being greedy and selfish with regard to food. Growing lion's hair was a metaphor for the dangerous state of possession into which shamans fell whilst in trance: "...it was sometimes the case that a !gi:xa (shaman) would become violently possessed, beating the air and biting those attempting to restrain him. His jugular vein stood out rigid and the tiny hairs on his back became erect. These hairs were known as 'lion's hair', and, while the entranced !gi:xa was held down, fat was rubbed onto his neck to remove them. It was believed that if these measures were not taken to pacify him and return him to his senses he would turn into a lion and attack people". Hewitt, *Southern San*, pp.99-100, 106-109. Jackals and hyenas ("wolves") were also animals notorious for their treacherous meanness about sharing food.

where potency derived from the spirit of a dying eland. Time would unfold the paradoxical truth that peace could be as dangerous as war, as far as the San were concerned, for in the former state the insidious ideas of the colonists penetrated the minds of the San more easily and contributed to the eventual extinction of an entire culture.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EASTERN FRONTIER

The failure of the General Commando and the prospect of a long struggle became clear early in 1775 for, although the Roggeveld San were reported to be quiet and peaceful, this was not the case further to the east.⁷² Opperman reported that between February and April the north-eastern districts had been subject to repeated San attacks. Some disheartened *trekboers* were beginning to leave the Sneeuberg for beyond the Bruinjies Hoogte. In the Swartberg, in February, a commando under the leadership of Van Jaarsveld and a certain A. van der Walt had succeeded in capturing eighty-two San. Since there had not been any hand-cuffs to secure the captives they had attempted to escape one night, attacking their captors and trying to recover their bows and arrows. Some escaped but nineteen were shot and twenty-one children recaptured. This incident prompted Van der Walt to request that in future no prisoners should be taken since it was too risky to try to confine them.⁷³ The official response to this request is unknown but from this moment on men on commando showed even less inclination to take adult male San prisoners. Between March and August well over 200 cattle and 500 sheep were stolen whilst additional livestock, including horses, was slaughtered. During the course of these attacks two herdsmen had been killed but over fifty San had been shot and thirteen of their children captured.⁷⁴

In order to pacify the Sneeuberg San it was deemed necessary to subdue the San of the Seekoei River. This river flows northwards from behind the Sneeuberg to the Orange River and was densely populated with San. It was thought, with much justification, that the Sneeuberg San were driving stolen cattle down the Seekoei River to the Orange River, far beyond the reach of the pursuing commandos. There is evidence that some of this booty may have been given to, or bartered with, groups of Orange River Khoikhoi, perhaps as far to the west as Pella.⁷⁵

On 1 August 1775 seventy-seven men under the leadership of Adriaan van Jaarsveld set out to destroy the San of the Seekoei River. Feigning friendship and pretending that the commando was

72. CA, I/STB 10/162, W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 1 Sept. 1775.

73. Opperman to Landdrost, 1 May 1775, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.67-68, n.

74. Ibid.; also Report of Opperman, 15 Aug. 1775, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.42-43.

75. See chapter 8, p.306 below.

intent simply on hunting, Van Jaarsveld's party shot a number of hippopotami and left the carcasses on the river bank. The commando then moved downstream and returned quietly that night where, as expected, a large number of San were feasting on the hippopotami. At dawn, in a surprise attack, Van Jaarsveld's men massacred one hundred and twenty-two of the San and took twenty-one prisoners. Only five escaped. It was an act of treachery that would not be forgotten and ensured that future peace negotiations would be soured by mistrust.⁷⁶

Continuing operations in the mountains to the east of the Seekoei River, the Roode Bergen, the commando killed a further sixty-one San and captured fifteen. Thereafter, reports that large numbers of San were fleeing northwards, as well as news that more farms had been attacked whilst the commando had been in the field, encouraged the commando members to disband and return to their homes in September 1775. The foray down the Seekoei River had not, therefore, been an unqualified success for it was clear that commandos were powerless to prevent the infiltration of hostile San behind them.⁷⁷

By March 1776 the Sneeubergen had lost a further 200 cattle and 500 sheep. Three shepherds had been killed and eight horses stolen. Five colonists had been forced to abandon their farms and only remained in the district because of the entreaties of their neighbours. Van Jaarsveld reported gloomily that despite three successive commandos only twenty-three San had been shot: "Thus the commandos, according to the times, are now in vain". To add insult to injury his own "captain", the man to whom he had entrusted his farm whilst on commando, deserted "to his accomplices in the field" taking seventy-eight of Van Jaarsveld's sheep with him. With "sighs and prayers" the Sneeubergen petitioned the Company to send reinforcements in order to save them from "the great assemblages of these heathenish evil doers" who were now numbered in their thousands. Indeed, one of the commandos had had the novel and unpleasant experience of having been surrounded by a group of San which so outnumbered them that they had been lucky to escape with their lives.⁷⁸

76. Report of Field Corporal Adriaan van Jaarsveld, Sneeubergen, 4 Sept. 1775, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp. 43-46. Van Jaarsveld was to use a similar ruse against the Dange Xhosa in 1781 when he scattered tobacco amongst a hostile group and ordered his men to fire whilst the Xhosa were busy picking it up. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.110.

77. Ibid.

78. Letter from nine Inhabitants of Sneeubergen to Commandant Opperman, 18 March 1776; Report of A. van Jaarsveld, 18 March 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp. 53-54.

As far as the colonists were concerned these events contained some most disturbing signs. Khoikhoi servants were deserting their masters to swell the ranks of San resisters; horses were being stolen instead of killed, an indication that the thieves wished to ride them; and the San were joining their smaller groups into larger forces which could not therefore, be annihilated in a piecemeal fashion.

The Sneeuwberg was not the only area where San or Khoisan resistance was cause for alarm. In the Camdeboo and Swarte Ruggens (to the south of the Camdeboo) a series of robberies between December 1775 and January 1776 provoked *Veldkorporaal* Hendrik Myntjes van der Bergh into leading a commando against the robbers. M.A. Bergh, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, was informed that the stock losses had amounted to ninety-seven sheep and seventy-five cattle, while on the other hand Van der Bergh's commando had killed forty-five Khoisan and taken thirty-six prisoners. These figures alarmed the *landdrost* who wrote to Opperman and Van der Bergh requesting that "in such cases they should henceforth act with somewhat greater moderation, be less vindictive, and as much as possible avoid the shedding of so much human blood". Bergh further declared that in future no commandos should be sent out without his express authorisation since so much unnecessary bloodshed drew down "the righteous vengeance of Heaven" on the country and its inhabitants.⁷⁹

Such proposals, though highly creditable to the humanity of *Landdrost* Bergh, were completely unacceptable to the frontier farmers who were locked in a life or death struggle with the Khoisan. Soon after passing the above resolutions the *landdrost* was informed that large numbers of hostile Khoisan were gathering in the vicinity of the Koup, the Sak River and the Nieuweveld where they were fortifying themselves in mountain retreats. There were also reports of banditry in the Swarteberg, far to the west. Opperman, in his capacity as *veld commandant*, requested at least 200 men, as well as large quantities of powder and shot, in order to mount a commando. It was impossible, he reported, for local *veldkorporaals* to go to the assistance of any other district since they had barely enough men to defend their own.⁸⁰

In the Nieuweveld the situation of the *trekboers* became so desperate that they could not await the government's response to Opperman's plea. Over 100 cattle and 400 sheep had been stolen whilst a shepherd had been killed. Jacob de Klerk, the local *veldkorporaal*, led a commando against the

79. CA, C 655, 5 March 1776; Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.52-53.

80. Letters from Opperman to Landdrost, 27 March, 1776 and 13 April 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp. 54-55.

fortified caves of the bandits but was too weak to press the attack. In March he managed to persuade *Veldkorporaal* Zarel Marais from the Sneeu Berg to send reinforcements from his district and the two commandos shot dead 111 Khoisan. This success did not stop many *trekboers* from abandoning the Nieuweveld whilst the prevalence of horse distemper further weakened the position of the frontier farmers.⁸¹

Whilst Opperman continued to bombard the *landdrost* with requests for a commando, Khoisan attacks spread to the Swarteberg and the Roggeveld. After cattle thefts in the Klein Roggeveld in February 1776, Gerrit Putter led a commando to the Sak River but he failed to find the robbers and spent most of his time looking for water.⁸² Slaves and Khoikhoi servants were being killed on farms throughout the Roggeveld and stock losses caused at least four farmers of the Onder Roggeveld to abandon the district. The local *veldkorporaal*, Willem Steenkamp, complained that neighbouring *veldkorporaals* had refused to come to his assistance.⁸³ Further evidence for the growing unpopularity of commando duty came from the Sneeu Berg in April when Hendrik van der Bergh reported that he could not get any men in his district to go on commando since they either refused or left the district. One of them, Hendrik Krugel, began to encourage those who had vacated the Nieuweveld and Sneeu Berg for Agter Brintjies Hoogte to place themselves under the *drostdy* of Swellendam, thereby avoiding having to do commando duty in the Stellenbosch district. He managed to gather forty-eight signatures and, in addition, accused Van der Bergh of inhuman treatment of the Khoisan. Although Krugel and his followers were ordered to submit to the authority of Stellenbosch, and although Krugel himself was open to a number of counter accusations (such as bartering with the Xhosa and kidnapping Khoikhoi servants from other colonists), it was quite clear that insubordination and dissent were on the increase. Even Opperman began to complain about the severity of his duties.⁸⁴

At last, on 7 May 1776, the *Landdrost* and *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch decided to respond to Opperman's pleas for assistance. There was actually very little that the authorities could do apart from sending the much needed supplies of powder and shot. The *landdrost* was convinced that another General Commando was necessary and authorised Opperman to undertake one in the way he best saw fit. Since, however, he declined to send any reinforcements, believing that the number

81. Ibid.

82. CA, 1/STB 10/162, G. Putter to Landdrost Bergh, 9 Feb. 1776.

83. Report of Corporal W. Steinkamp to Landdrost, 29 April 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.69, n.

84. Report of H.M. van den Berg [sic] to Opperman, 11 April 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.69, n.; CA, C 655, 5 Nov. 1776; Report of Commandant Opperman, 1 April 1777, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.66-68; 68, n.

of men already under the command of the thirteen frontier *veldwagtmeesters* was sufficient, the balance of power was unlikely to be altered. Opperman was given leave to obtain material support from those who had farms on the frontier but did not themselves live there. He was also instructed, once again, to avoid the needless shedding of blood and to send out commandos only when strictly necessary.⁸⁵

If anything these resolutions serve to suggest that the Company did not view the crisis on the frontier quite as seriously as did the *trekboers*. The lack of direction which the authorities displayed was no doubt due partly to impotence but also partly to complacency. The meat supply in 1776-1777 was both cheap and plentiful as a result of the increase in livestock (ascribed to the absence of diseases) and the increase in foreign shipping at the Cape (which had lowered the price of food by increasing consumption).⁸⁶ The resolutions of 7 May also provide us with an insight into the way in which the Company officials, briefed no doubt by popular prejudice, explained the struggle on the frontier to themselves. To the official mind there was a clear dichotomy between "predatory Bushmen" (who were regarded as robbers to be destroyed) and the "good Hottentots" (the destroyers of the "Bushmen"). These "good Hottentots" had been expelled from their country, not by the Europeans but by the "Bushmen". Once the "Hottentots" had been expelled the "Bushmen", driven by their predatory instincts to find people to rob, fell on the European settlers. Their task was made easier by the fact that:

in consequence of the progressive deterioration of the farms and pastures in the nearer districts, our inhabitants are compelled, by necessity, from time to time, to seek better farms at a distance, and with the approbation of our government, to settle in those grassy countries, whence the good aborigines or Hottentots, who always lived on good terms with us, have been gradually ejected by the depredations of the Bushmen, although these do not, like the others, turn the country to any useful purpose.⁸⁷

The above "reasoning" served both to justify and excuse the activities of the *trekboers* by shifting all the blame onto the San. As for the Khoikhoi, they were portrayed as faithful but subservient allies who had forfeited their birth-right through their inability to defend themselves against the San. The clear implication was that the land belonged to the colonists both by default and because the San did not "turn the country to any useful purpose".⁸⁸ Given these assumptions it is

85. CA, C 655, 7 May 1776; Extract Records of the Board of Landdrost and Militia Officers Stellenbosch, 7 May 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.55-57.

86. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.50, n.

87. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.56.

88. There are clear parallels here with what has been termed the "deficiency land-use doctrine" in America which justified the expulsion of American Indians from their land. See Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, 1979), pp. 131, 113, 120, 138 and 152.

somewhat surprising that the *landdrost* nevertheless continued to urge commandos to behave moderately when attacking the San.⁸⁹

The Council of Policy only approved of the decision to forward supplies of powder and shot on 11 June 1776. By this date Adriaan van Jaarsveld and his men had already been forced to abandon the Sneeu Berg and retreat to the Camdeboo. This was largely as a consequence of the shortage of ammunition although the unwillingness of men to serve on commandos was a contributory factor.⁹⁰ The experiment of arming "faithful Hottentots or Bastards" and allowing them to operate independently was not entirely successful since they frequently joined the robbers or warned them of approaching commandos.⁹¹ In addition, *Veldkorporaal* Van der Bergh was obliged to lead a commando against the kraal of a Khoikhoi captain to whom a staff of office had earlier been given.⁹² Attempts to reoccupy the Sneeu Berg were not successful. In June the unfortunate Van Jaarsveld suffered the infuriating experience of having his livestock stolen, whilst away on commando, by the ex-captain who had deserted his service in March.⁹³ The numbers of the hostile Khoisan had become so large that neither Van Jaarsveld's nor Charl Marais' commandos could overcome them. Gordon, who visited the Sneeu Berg in November 1777, was taken to the site where a certain Van der Walt had been killed in June 1776. His report of the engagement, presumably one of scores like it, illuminates the social solidarity and simple life style of the Sneeu Berg San:

This battlefield was a rocky hill where they [the Khoi] had concealed themselves, and although the farmers shot many of them they could not take the hill. On it the Hottentots had piled up stones everywhere, to serve as fortifications. Each time they hit an enemy the one that did so yelled "Hoi ha!" We found their deserted village of about twelve or thirteen huts, but there was nothing to be seen but dry bushes in a semicircle, sheltered to the S, over which they hang mats, and open to the E. They were lying around next to these bushes. In one hut I counted eight sleeping places each of which was a shallow hollow in the ground, eight inches deep in the middle, all close together; each [sleeper] covered himself with his hide. I found some poorly baked potsherds which had been carved for ornamentation on the outside. Van der Walt had been shot from a distance of

89. CA, C 655, 11 June 1776.

90. Opperman to Landdrost, 17 May 1776 and Field Sergeant D.S. van der Merwe to Landdrost, 5 June 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.57-58 and 70, n.

91. "I sent to the people in my district to tell them that those who had faithful Hottentots or Bastards that could use a gun, should send them to me, which they did, and this fellow was sent by J. de Wegen with a gun to come to me; but instead of coming to me, he went to the robbers, and told them a conunando was out against them, on which they fled". Opperman to Landdrost, 17 May, 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.58.

92. CA, CO 6127, Moodie's Lists, Second Supplement, Van der Bergh to Landdrost, 11 April 1776.

93. Ibid. , A. van Jaarsveld to Landdrost, 9 July 1776.

twenty-four paces. We saw no skeletons and only one grave, which was a round heap of stone.⁹⁴

Dispirited and discouraged Van Jaarsveld decided to leave the Camdeboo and go to Agter Bruintjies Hoogte. His departure left the remaining Sneeubergers in desperate straits and exposed the Camdeboo to imminent attack.⁹⁵ The Koup had already been abandoned because of drought and poor grazing so that, by the end of 1776, the frontier seemed to be retreating.⁹⁶ In the Hantam there had been a determined night attack by some San on the farm of Gerrit van Wijk. Several of his Khoikhoi servants had been killed or wounded and some cattle and goats were stolen. Similar murders and robberies were reported from the Roggeveld.⁹⁷ What distinguished these attacks was that they were directed against the persons and dwellings of the farmers and not just their livestock. The struggle was intensifying.

Despite the complacent attitude of the government there were some influential men at the Cape who were becoming alarmed by these developments. There were obviously many colonists from the south-western Cape who had farming interests on the northern frontier for it was from the Tygerberg and Koeberg districts that the suggestion came for a permanent frontier force to protect the farmers. It was envisaged that this force, or mounted guard, would consist of about thirty men who would be in the field for three or four consecutive months. Their pay and provisions would be provided by interested parties, both from the frontier and the Cape districts. The trouble with such a scheme, according to the *landdrost*, was that it would be difficult to administer and he recommended that the principal initiator of the idea, the ex-lieutenant of the Cape District, N. Laubscher, should sort out the practical details. Laubscher agreed to do so but one must assume that the practicalities were too daunting for the scheme came to nothing.⁹⁸ A suggestion from J.A. Louw, the newly appointed *veldkorporaal* of the Roggeveld, that men from the Olifants River district be obliged to assist commandos in the Roggeveld, was sympathetically received by the authorities. But the men of the Olifants River took a different view of the matter

94. Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.85.

95. Letter from twenty-five Inhabitants of Sneeuberg, 17 Nov 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.60-61; Letters from Sarel Marais to Landdrost, 28 May 1776 and Field Sergeant Van der Merwe, 5 June 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.70, n.; P.J. Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, p.13.

96. CA, C 655, 5 Nov. 1776.

97. G. van Wyk to A. van Zyl, [May] 1776; W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 9 July 1776; A. van Zyl to Landdrost, 16 May 1776, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.69, n. and 70, n. Van Wyk's letter contains the poignant lines: "I inform you that the Bushmen attacked my farm last night, they surrounded and shot upon all the straw huts, they cruelly murdered three Hottentot children in the huts, and severely wounded my Witebooy, the very dogs and the whole premises (werf) are full of arrows; we had to keep them off all night by firing on them".

98. CA, C 655, 3 Sept. 1776.

and refused to go.⁹⁹ When it came to commando duty it was proving to be extremely difficult to transcend regional interests.

With Van Jaarsveld's departure to Agter Brintjies Hoogte, the defence of the Sneeu Berg fell to Carel van der Merwe and his brother, David Schalk van der Merwe, the *veldwagtmeester* of the Camdeboo. Since the security of the Camdeboo depended on that of the Sneeu Berg, and since the two *veldwagtmeesters* were brothers, they collaborated together more enthusiastically than was usually the case when leaders from different districts took the field together. The brothers also appear to have been better educated and of a more religious bent than their peers for their reports (particularly David's) show a delight in detail and a tendency to be moved by Biblical exhortations. Following further murder and robbery in the Sneeu Berg in December 1776 David decided to go to Carel's aid with a commando. This fraternal solidarity did not necessarily mean that all of the men were happy to be on commando. David experienced great difficulty in summoning the Camdeboo colonists for duty and had to swallow some humorous insolence, as well as implausible excuses, from the men under his command.¹⁰⁰ It was becoming quite common to send a Khoikhoi or "Bastaard" servant on commando in one's place and this was a development that caused considerable resentment amongst both *veldwagtmeesters* and those who could not avoid their military duty.

Between December 1776 and March 1777 David van der Merwe's commando campaigned in the Sneeu Berg. It consisted of a mere thirty Europeans and twenty-six Khoikhoi, hardly enough men to deal with the "hundreds and thousands" of enemies who, despite their large numbers, seemed able to make themselves remarkably scarce when a commando was hunting them. More than seventy San were shot dead during these months but this was reckoned to be a frustratingly small total by those who had spent nearly four months trying to achieve a decisive victory. As had happened on previous occasions the commando returned to find that farms had been attacked,

99. CA, C 655, 5 Nov. 1776 and 10 Dec. 1776.

100. Amongst several choice insults C. Olivier, for instance, replied to D.S. van der Merwe as follows: "Good friend D.S. van der Merwe, I have received your letter, and learn from it that it will not turn out well; that you may think of it, I have sent the Hottentot early; for the rest, think well of it before you order me. My compliments to you." When Van der Merwe asked C. de Clerck to send his wagon on commando to carry provisions it arrived without the tilt. Van der Merwe wrote to request the tilt and got the following reply: "You write me to send my wagon tilt tomorrow, which is impossible that I can do, as it is the bolster of my bed. I am not unwilling, if I had enough bed clothes, to give the tilt, but I am deficient in these. I remain, therefore, after compliments, your friend, Cornelius de Clerck". Turning over the letter Van der Merwe discovered an additional note: "The tilt of which I write you, is the bolster for my head, and my wife is my mattress; so if you claim the tilt by force, order the mattress with it, as cook." General Report of Field Serjeant D.S. van der Merwe, 13 March 1777, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp. 62-64.

livestock robbed and herdsmen killed in regions closer to home.¹⁰¹ March and April brought no respite. In the Camdeboo and lower Sneeuberg alone over 1600 sheep and 235 cattle were stolen. Retaliatory commandos managed to kill seventy-three of the robbers but no end to the fighting was in sight. Some idea of the number of Khoisan involved in resistance may be derived from the report of H.M. van der Bergh whose commando had encountered a group of over three hundred Khoisan.¹⁰²

The *trekboers* of the north-eastern frontier zone were desperate and had used up the ammunition which the government had granted in June 1776. They thus appealed for urgent help from the Company and couched their request in terms which they knew would make an impact. They stressed their exceeding poverty and pointed out that they were unable to secure their own subsistence, much less pay the Company the arrears of rent for their loan-farms.¹⁰³ It was this request for remission of rent which galvanised the authorities into sending 1500 pounds of gunpowder, 3000 pounds of lead and 3000 flints to the *veldwagtmeesters*. The government did not, however, relax its injunction to treat captives, women and children humanely. In an attempt to prevent any further atrocities (the accusations of Krugel were no doubt fresh in their minds) it was now required that not only the *veldwagtmeester* should sign a written report after a commando but all the men as well. It was hoped that this measure would enable the authorities to investigate any allegations of cruelty more thoroughly.¹⁰⁴

Despite the fact that the stage now seemed to be set for another round of determined commando activity there was a surprising lull in fighting in the Camdeboo and Sneeuberg districts from mid 1777 until the beginning of 1779. Quite why this was so is uncertain though it may have had something to do with the visit of the commander of the Cape garrison, Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, to the north-eastern frontier zone at the end of 1777. Gordon's journey had, as one of its objectives, the making of peace with the "wild Bushmen". "I shall do all I can to confer with some of them and see if this savage war cannot be brought to an end."¹⁰⁵ It is safe to assume that this was a government initiative and the frontier farmers must have known what Gordon's purpose was. They would, consequently, have been on their best behaviour and done nothing to jeopardise

101. Ibid.

102. Address to Opperman, 15 March 1777; Reports of Commandant Opperman, 1 April 1777 and 10 April 1777, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, pp.65-69.

103. CA, C 655, 6 May 1777; Extract Records of Landdrost and Militia Officers, Stellenbosch, 6 May 1777 and 5 June 1777, in Moodie, *The Record*, Vol. 111, pp.69-71.

104. CA, C 655, 16 June 1777; Extract Records Landdrost, Heemraden, and Militia Officers Stellenbosch, 16 June 1777, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.71.

105. Gordon, 16 Dec. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.115.

peace efforts. When Gordon visited the Sneeuwberg, Carel van der Merwe told him that "everything was at peace here with regard to the Bushmen".¹⁰⁶ It is possible, however, that this uncharacteristic state of affairs had other explanations and that a severe drought had caused many San to seek temporary succour at the Orange River. Gordon noted that the Seekoei River was almost dry in places and that "over this whole countryside, the Agter Sneeuwberg, it has rained very little this year".¹⁰⁷ Another possible reason for the comparative calm of the Sneeuwberg in late 1777 was that there were fewer *trekboers* in the region than before, many having fled to the Zuurveld or Agter Bruintjies Hoogte. Whatever the reasons, however, both sides were exhausted after four years of incessant war and were, in all probability, quietly intent on restoring their strength. The unvanquished resolution of the Sneeuwberg San is evident in an extraordinary exchange which Gordon saw fit to record for posterity:

These so called Bushmen or Chinese have a famous chief called Koerikei, or bullet-escaper. Veldwagmeester Van der Merwen told me that, after an action which he had commanded, this Koerikei, standing on a cliff out of range, shouted out to him: "What are you doing on my land? You have taken all the places where the eland and other game live. Why did you not stay where the sun goes down, where you first came from?" Van der Merwen asked why he did not live in peace as before, and why he did not go hunting with them, (He had been living with the farmers) and whether he did not have enough country as it was? He replied that he did not want to lose the country of his birth and that he would kill their herdsman, and that he would chase them all away. As he went off he further said that it would be seen who would win.¹⁰⁸

Unfortunately Gordon was unable to make contact with a single San although he went "further into this region than any commando even".¹⁰⁹ The San were obviously aware of Gordon's party since the smoke of their signal fires was observed and various traces of their presence were also discovered. Both the size and composition of Gordon's party, which included frontier farmers and must have looked like a commando, dissuaded the San from approaching. It is hardly remarkable, therefore, that Gordon's peace initiative came to nothing but his visit to the north-eastern and eastern frontier districts did indicate that the government was becoming increasingly concerned with events in these areas.

Indeed, there is a sense in which the years 1777-1778 mark the inauguration of the official eastern frontier zone for in 1778 the governor himself, Van Plettenberg, made an unprecedented

106. Gordon, 13 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.81.

107. Gordon, 19 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.88.

108. Gordon, 13 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.81.

109. Gordon, 22 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.95.

visit to the eastern borders of the colony.¹¹⁰ The visit stemmed from the governor's desire to impose greater administrative control on a region that was becoming increasingly volatile. With the Sneeuwberg closed to them, growing numbers of *trekboers* had entered the Bruinje Hoogte, Bamboes Berg and Zuurveld areas and the first reports of disturbances in these districts began to reach the government between 1777 and 1778.¹¹¹ For the first time relationships between the Xhosa and the colonists loomed as large as those between the Khoisan and the colonists. The constant violence and insecurity of frontier life had seriously undermined government authority. Opperman wished to resign and the number of absentees from military drill was always high.¹¹² The distance of the frontier from Stellenbosch and Cape Town encouraged certain colonists to behave in ways which alarmed both the authorities and their fellow frontiersmen. Thus it was that some of the more respectable inhabitants of the Camdeboo petitioned the governor for a clergyman and a *landdrost* in order to counter the growing Godlessness and insubordination of the district.¹¹³

Van Plettenberg hoped, by a combination of discussion and decree, to establish boundaries beyond which disputing parties would not move. In the east he negotiated an agreement, with some minor Xhosa chieftains, that the Fish River should be recognised as the colonial boundary. None of the other Xhosa felt bound to accept this treaty and very few of the colonists chose to observe it either. In the Sneeuwberg, noticing the paucity of European farmers, the governor suggested that the best way to defeat the San would be to increase the area's colonial population. Obligated to listen to numerous complaints of one colonist against another he remarked that whilst the inhabitants seemed well disposed towards him "if they had greater charity towards one another, they would surely live a happier life".¹¹⁴ Proceeding down the Seekoei River (which he renamed Van Plettenberg's River) the governor presided over the wanton slaughter of scores of hippopotami before reaching the point that Gordon had reached the year before. Here he erected a

110. The journal of Van Plettenberg's expedition may be found in Godee Molsbergen (ed.), *Reizen*, Vol. 2, pp.61-78, Vol. 4, pp.39-62; George McCall Theal, comp., "Reis van den gouverneur Joachim van Plettenberg, 1778", in *Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten Verzameld in de Kaap Kolonie en Elders*, Vol. 1 (Cape Town, 1896).

111. The first mention of commandos in the Bamboes Berg is in *Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa Within the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, Or Beyond the Frontier of That Colony, Part 1. Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed, 18 March 1835* where the Resolution of 1 Dec. 1778 is cited: "The governor having returned from a journey to the interior as far as the Camdeboo district, communicated to the council various interesting applications which had been made by the inhabitants. This gave rise to the establishment of a drostdy at Graaf Reynet, and several other measures; amongst which, the despatching of a large commando to the Bamboes Bergen, in order to check the depredations of the Bushmen".

112. CA, C 656, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1778-1781, 6 Jan. 1778.

113. Petition of Inhabitants of Camdeboo, 24 March 1778, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.74.

114. J.A. Van Plettenberg to Swellengrebel, 1 Feb. 1779, in G.J. Schutte, (ed.), *Briefwisseling Van Hendrik Swellengrebel*, p.308.

beacon whose purpose was to delimit the north-eastern boundary of the colony; but as soon as he departed the San lost no time in destroying this rather premature symbol of European authority.¹¹⁵

Nothing in the governor's actions seems to mark his visit as being the watershed in frontier history which, in fact, it was.¹¹⁶ His visit signified, in a sense, official recognition of the vastly superior stock-raising potential of the eastern regions of the colony (in comparison to the northern regions) and the crucial significance of the meat supply to the Cape economy. It also marked the point at which the northern and eastern frontiers became distinct. This was formally symbolised in 1785 with the establishment of a new *drostdy* in the district (which the inhabitants of the Camdeboo had been asking for since March 1778), that of Graaff-Reinet.¹¹⁷ Naturally the two frontier zones, the northern and the eastern, did not cease to be connected. Shocks experienced in one section of the frontier sent percussion waves along the entire frontier zone. The two frontier zones were also connected by a common hinge in the north-east: the Sneeuberg, Agter Broukster, Hoogte and Bamboes Berg districts. Originally these north-eastern parts were almost exclusively occupied by the Khoisan and in this respect they shared some of the most important characteristics of the northern frontier zone. But from 1785 they fell under the jurisdiction of the *landdrost* of Graaff-Reinet and became more and more involved in the dynamics of the eastern frontier zone. It is for this reason that this study, which is primarily concerned with the northern frontier zone, will not pay as much attention to these north-eastern regions after 1785 - except where their story is inextricably linked to that of the northern frontier.

THE YEARS OF ATTRITION, 1779-1789

The immediate consequence of Van Plettenberg's frontier visit was that the colonists were encouraged to renew their assaults on the San of the north-eastern regions. The Bamboes Berg was perceived to be an area where "the said robbers now harboured in great numbers" and the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch (who had accompanied the governor to the eastern districts), authorised

115. See sources cited in note 110 above; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, pp.14, 24; Gordon, 3 and 4 Oct. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.181. The beacon was raised about twenty-six kilometres due west of present day Colesburg. Fragments of it may be seen in the Cultural History Museum, Cape Town.

116. For E. Walker's view that the visit of Van Plettenberg marked the beginning of the frontier tradition in South Africa see chapter one, pp.5-6 above.

117. The date of the establishment of the district and *drostdy* of Graaff-Reinet seems to be a matter of some dispute. *Papers Relative*, p.20 and J.S. Bergh and J.C. Visagie in *The Eastern Cape Frontier Zone 1660-1980* (Durban, 1985), p.12, cite the founding resolution as being 26 Aug. 1785 but Giliomee, in "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812", p.465, n.54 has 1786. The boundaries of the new district were proclaimed on 19 July 1786.

the despatch of a large commando to that vicinity.¹¹⁸ Although this was decided on in March 1779 it was not until August that the commando set out. Rivalries amongst local *veldwagtmeesters* had become so intense that the leadership of the commando had to be decided on by the drawing of a lot whilst the number of absentees and shirkers seriously affected the commando's strength. Eventually the Bamboes Berg commando had to return after having killed relatively few San, "for we were much too weak to surround and turn such a great number of robbers ... we found that such weak commandos rather embolden the robbers than impress them with fear".¹¹⁹

Both before and during the commando to the Bamboes Berg the San continued their attacks on colonial farms and 1779 was one of the worst as far as stock losses were concerned. The *landdrost* estimated that a total of 750 cattle and 3 062 sheep were stolen from the frontier farmers of the north-east during this time and local commandos, though they shot dead large numbers of the San, could not check the almost continuous attacks.¹²⁰ By November 1779 the farmers in the Camdeboo were complaining that:

There has never been such an irruption of the Bushmen as now, for here we see Bushmen daily, and though we make every exertion, we cannot overtake them, the country is so rugged and hilly. They light fires in the mountain before our eyes; and as the Bushmen have now such free access, please to see, sir, the number of cattle that have been carried off recently.¹²¹

Part of the problem, according to *Veldkorporaal* Albertus van Jaarsvelt, was that some of the Sneeu-berg farmers had left the Sneeu-berg to live at the Rhenosterberg, thus weakening the front line of defence and allowing the San to gain unimpeded access to the Camdeboo. Even more serious were reports that certain residents of the Agter Sneeu-berg had struck a deal with the San whereby the latter would be allowed to pass safely through the district with cattle stolen from the Camdeboo provided that they left the Agter Sneeu-bergers in peace.¹²² Such allegations, though plausible, were difficult to prove and it may have been that the Camdeboo farmers were simply easier targets than the Agter Sneeu-bergers. In any event the supposed San collaborators suffered

118. CA, C 656, 9 March and 13 April 1779; Extract of Records of Militia Court, 9 March and 13 April 1779, Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, pp.79-80.

119. Report of Field Sergeant Charl Marais, 2 Sept. 1779; Report of Field Sergeant Carel van der Merwe, 3 Sept. 1779; Report of Corporal A. van Jaarsvelt, 3 Sept. 1779; Report of Field Sergeant D.S. van der Merwe, 4 Sept. 1779; Reports of Field Sergeant H.M. van der Berg [sic] and A. van Jaarsvelt, 11 Sept. 1779; Report of Sergeant Josua Joubert, 29 Sept. 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, pp.81-86.

120. Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.89, n.

121. Letter from A. van Jaarsvelt to Landdrost, 15 Nov. 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, pp.86-87.

122. *Ibid.*

severe stock losses, as well as the murder of their shepherds, less than a year later.¹²³ The settlers of Bruintjies Hoogte were also on the defensive at the end of 1779 with the San operating in such large groups that one commando had to fly in the face of the enemy. According to the *veldkorporaal* the "greater part of the men" had fled the district altogether.¹²⁴

As the 1780s commenced the strength of San resistance in the Sneeuberg seemed undiminished. On more and more occasions colonists were fired on by guns whilst fewer and fewer men heeded the summons to commando duty. "I get more excuses than men," complained David van der Merwe from the Camdeboo.¹²⁵ The habit of sending a Khoikhoi servant in one's place seemed to herald a time, according to Carel van der Merwe of the Sneeuberg, when "I shall at last have to do commando with none but Hottentots, which cannot be".¹²⁶ Robberies continued, San were killed and, all of the time, captives were taken. A letter which deserves quoting in full, since it combines the characteristic themes of the day, is that which Dirk Koetse wrote to *Veldkorporaal* A.P. Burger:

I beg that you will for this time be satisfied with a Hottentot, for I am lying here in the fields with my cattle, and my wife, because my cattle are dying; for I am daily driven away by W. Lubbe and P. Jacobs. I have desired my Hottentot to catch a little one for me, and I beg that if he gets one, he may be allowed to keep it, and that you will see that the Hottentot has victuals.¹²⁷

Lack of co-operation, individual and regional self-interest was bedevilling the prosecution of the war. In an attempt to co-ordinate military operations, and simplify the thirteen separate areas of command in the frontier zone, the authorities made one final attempt, before the creation of the new *drostdy* of Graaff-Reinet in 1785, to revive the principles of the General Commando. In October and November 1780 the *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch appointed a *commandant* of the Eastern Districts and a *commandant* of the Northern Districts.¹²⁸ In a sense these offices became redundant in 1785 and it is debatable whether their existence helped to overcome any of the inherent difficulties of mobilising men in isolated and vulnerable communities. The *commandant* of the North was to have command over the *veldwagtmeesters* of the Sneeuberg, the Nieuweveld, the Koup, the Roggeveld and the Hantam. Charl Marais was the appointee and David de Villiers

123. Report of Field Sergeant Carel van der Merwe, 25 August 1780, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.103.

124. Report of Field Corporal C. Botma, 7 Dec 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.88.

125. Report of Field Sergeant D.S. van der Merwe, 5 Jan. 1780, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.102.

126. Report of Field Sergeant Carel van der Merwe, 16 Sept. 1780, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.104.

127. D. Koetse to A. Burger, 23 Aug. 1780, in Moodie, *The Record*, Prt. 111, p.104, n. See also CA 1/STB 10/164, 23 Aug. 1780.

128. CA, C 656, 10 Oct. and 14 Nov. 1780.

his assistant. It may be seen that at this stage the Sneeuwberg was considered to be part of the northern frontier whereas in 1785 it was attached to the eastern command of Graaff-Reinet.

In practical terms the division of 1780 made little difference and the struggle continued to be fought at a local level. In April 1785 De Villiers, who had become *commandant* of the North, presented the *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch with a summary of the losses suffered in his district during the last year: 779 cattle, 64 horses, 5 889 sheep and goats stolen; 17 shepherds murdered and 6 muskets carried off. He was forced to state his inability to raise commandos in the frontier districts because of the flight of the majority of inhabitants from Agter Hex River, the Swarteberg, the Roggeveld, the Koup, the Camdeboo and the Sneeuwberg. Farms had been overrun, houses destroyed and the fear was that, before too long, the "roofzugtige natie ... tot naby de Breede Rivier en te Land van Waveren innickende ...".¹²⁹

This was, with hindsight, a somewhat alarmist assessment of the situation for it was predicting a return to the colonial boundaries of 1700! There was, however, no doubt that the colonial frontier was on the retreat everywhere in the Northern Districts despite more than a decade of almost constant commando activity. The Khoisan were gaining the upper hand. The government was suitably panic stricken and issued instructions that all farmers who had deserted their farms should return to them within four months or forfeit them. The resolution of 27 December 1775, that no colonist should cross the Great Fish River, was reiterated. In an extraordinary gesture of desperate generosity the government also agreed to grant loan-farms free of charge for ten years, if the land lay between the Plettenberg (Seekoei) and Sak Rivers, so as to establish a protecting cordon of colonists against the incursions of the San. Finally, as usual, a commando was planned, but nothing distinguished it from the many inconclusive and undermanned expeditions that had gone before it.¹³⁰ Though nearly 500 San were killed and 112 captured by commandos in the eastern districts between 1787 and 1788 it did not seem as though there was a military solution to the frontier war.¹³¹

THE ROGGEVELD, NIEUWEVELD AND HANTAM, 1777-1789

The growing importance of the eastern frontier after 1777-1778 and the intensity of the struggle in the north-eastern mountains of the frontier zone does not mean that the more westerly regions

¹²⁹ CA 1/STB 10/164, 19 April 1785.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ P.J. van der Merwe, *Noordwaarse Beweging*, pp.48-49.

of the interior escarpment enjoyed a respite. The impasse in the Sneeu Berg increased tensions throughout the frontier zone, especially in the environmentally marginal fringes of the Roggeveld and Nieuweveld. Mounting pressures provoked renewed Khoisan resistance in these regions and it was clear that here too the *trekboers* were on the defensive.

In August 1777 *Veldwagtmeester* Adriaan van Zyl reported to Stellenbosch that the San beyond the Roggeveld had made off with 300 cattle and 1 300 sheep. They had also attacked farmhouses and wounded the wife of W. van Wyk with an arrow. Van Zyl received permission to mount a commando in September, along with *veldwagtmeesters* G. Putter and W. Steenkamp.¹³² Steenkamp reported back in February 1778 that the commando had had very limited success because a Khoikhoi captain of the Bokkeveld had given the San advance warning of the impending attack. Further San attacks had followed this disturbing example of collaboration between Khoikhoi and San.¹³³ The new *veldwagtmeester* of the Klein and Middle Roggeveld, Carel Kruger, wrote in March that:

it has never before been so as now, from January to the present time with stealing and surrounding the houses by night, and discharging arrows at them, so that the people dare not venture out to protect the cattle; and we cannot take the field with a commando because of the prevalence of the horse distemper, but must await a suitable season.¹³⁴

By November men of the Hantam district were refusing to go on commando and there was a steady exodus of "Bastaards" and "Hottentots" towards Namaqualand and away from commando service.¹³⁵ A similar complaint was received from the Roggeveld in February 1779 as "the Bushmen come by night in 40 and 50 to lay waste the farms".¹³⁶ Eight months later the commando that was organised to deal with these San failed due to lack of support from the colonists.¹³⁷

News reached the demoralised *trekboers* of the Cape interior that there was a large concentration of San beyond the Sak River in the Karee Berg and that it was from this locality that the attacks

132. CA, C 655, 5 Aug. 1777.

133. CA, 1/STB 10/164, W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 3 Feb. 1778.

134. CA 1/STB 10/164, C. Kruger to Landdrost, 12 March 1778. On 4 Nov. 1777 it was reported that Hendrik Olivier had resigned as *veldwagtmeester* of the Middle Roggeveld at the same time as Gerrit Putter, *veldwagtmeester* of the Klein Roggeveld had trekked away. It was decided to unite both areas under one *veldwagtmeester*, namely, Carel Kruger, former *veldkorporaal* of the Middle Roggeveld. CA, C 655, 4 Nov. 1777.

135. Report of Field Sergeant A. van Zyl to Landdrost, 2 Nov. 1778, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.77.

136. CA, 1/STB 10/164, W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 15 Feb. 1779. Steenkamp wished to resign from his post because he was too fat to sit comfortably on his horse on long commandos.

137. CA, 1/STB 10/164, C. Kruger to Landdrost, 12 Oct. 1779.

on their farms were launched. For the moment events in the Bamboes Berg were too critical to permit the despatch of a commando to the Karee Berg but the government promised some action in the future.¹³⁸ In the meantime, in July 1779, Cornelius van Wyk, together with eleven other colonists, had the courage to move back into the Nieuweveld.¹³⁹ Intense fighting followed this somewhat premature move and, throughout 1780, San raids and colonial commando attacks spilt blood on the arid soil of the disputed territory.¹⁴⁰ Nearby, in the Koup, there were substantial numbers of "Bastard-Hottentots" who were threatened with imprisonment if they refused to participate in commandos. Their reluctance, however, should be measured against that of the inhabitants of the Swarteberg, twelve of whom refused to obey their *veldwagtmeester* when he ordered them to undertake a commando in the Nieuweveld in September 1780.¹⁴¹

The struggle for the Nieuweveld continued in 1781. In January Cornelius van Wyk led a commando which killed twenty-four San. In February the San stole 160 cattle and 100 sheep from Christoffel Smit. In March they stole 500 sheep and 35 cattle from *Veldwagtmeester* Hercules Viljoen and killed a shepherd.¹⁴² A pursuing commando killed four of the San. In May another 28 cattle were taken and the San killed four colonial Khoikhoi. In June 400 sheep and 34 cattle were taken and another two shepherds put to death. Viljoen was obliged to chase the robbers into the Roggeveld, along the Sak River, with a motley collection of ten Khoikhoi and one baptised "Bastaard" before any "Dutch" help was forthcoming.¹⁴³ In August someone by the name of Augustus Klynveld was killed by the San and his gun, together with 900 sheep, was stolen. In September Cornelius van Wyk informed the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch that nobody in his district could sell any cattle to the Company butchers because the San had stolen so much. There was a critical shortage of ammunition and commando activity was at a standstill as a result.¹⁴⁴ By 1786 a combination of drought and San resistance had driven the colonists out of the Nieuweveld and the Koup altogether. These districts were only re-occupied in 1793 and their abandonment is further testimony to the intensity of San resistance and the marginality of their natural resources.¹⁴⁵

138. CA, C 656, 11 May 1779.

139. Letter from Cornelius van Wyk to Landdrost, 8 July 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.81.

140. CA, 1/STB 10/164, C. van Wyk to Landdrost, 7 Oct. 1780.

141. CA, C 656, 27 Dec. 1780; CA, 1/STB 10/164, W. Herholdt to Landdrost, 1 Oct. 1780.

142. CA, 1/STB 10/163, C. van Wyk to Landdrost, 2 Sept. 1781.

143. CA, 1/STB 10/163, H. Viljoen to Landdrost, 11 April 1781 and 21 June 1781.

144. CA, 1/STB 10/163, C. van Wyk to Landdrost, 2 Sept. 1781.

145. P.J. van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, pp. 16-19.

In the adjacent district of the Roggeveld the San were also committing "braaf kwaat". In late December of 1780 a group attacked the Khoikhoi women and children on the farm of the widow Erasmus and killed six of them. In such circumstances it seemed safe to send a retaliatory commando which consisted entirely of Khoikhoi. The result was that eight of the San were shot dead when they were overtaken in the Middle Roggeveld by the vengeful Khoikhoi men.¹⁴⁶ In 1786 some San managed to steal two muskets from the shepherds of *Veldwagmeester* Gerrit Maritz and the latter was furious when his nearest neighbours refused to help him chase the robbers.¹⁴⁷ The next year Maritz asked that all Khoikhoi who were living in kraals be expelled from the district because he suspected that many of them were responsible, along with the San, for stealing livestock from the colonists.¹⁴⁸ Then, in 1788, San robbers attacked Maritz's farm, "Poortegal" near the Sak River and stole virtually all of his sheep.¹⁴⁹ In July 1789 the San attacked the Roggeveld farm of Cornelius Koet, killing three of his "volk" and destroying his possessions. Maritz led an unsuccessful commando after the San and complained bitterly about the surly, shirking behaviour of his men. Many had sent Khoikhoi servants in their place whilst Jan Snyder and Philip Snyman were threatening to give the *veldwagtmeesters* a hiding.¹⁵⁰ In September of the same year a group of San, armed with four muskets, stole Cornelius van Wyk's cattle and killed three of his servants. The "Bastaards" Gert Willemse and Matthys Scheffer had five of their horses killed as well as losing some cattle.¹⁵¹

By this stage Maritz was ready to resign; because of the constant threat of San to his isolated farm behind the Roggeveld; because he was sick, and because he could not keep enough of his horses fit for action. His resignation was not accepted, but his desperation is indicative of the strength of San resistance in the Roggeveld at the end of the 1780s.¹⁵² The colonists of this district were on the defensive and badly demoralised.

Throughout the length and breadth of the northern frontier zone, therefore, the 1770s and 1780s were years of intense struggle. It would have been remarkable if commando members had not carried back with them to their domestic units attitudes which had been acquired during the course of commando operations. The pervasive violence, the hatred and contempt of *trekboers* for

146. CA, 1/STB 10/163, P. Jacobs to Landdrost, 28 Jan. 1781.

147. CA, 1/STB 10/162, G. Maritz to Landdrost, 23 May 1786.

148. See p.275 above.

149. CA, 1/STB 10/162, A.H. Krakke and H. Scholtz to Landdrost, 11 Nov. 1788; J. van der Westhuizen and P. van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 20 Nov. 1788.

150. CA, 1/STB 10/162, G. Maritz to Landdrost, 16 April 1789 and 9 Aug. 1789.

151. CA, 1/STB 10/162, J.A. Nel to Landdrost, 10 Sept. 1789.

152. CA, 1/STB 10/162, G. Maritz to Landdrost, 24 Sept. 1789 and 14 Nov. 1789.

San life and an ethos of unfree labour, encouraged white farmers to treat all non-whites who were not actually in the commandos with them as potential enemies or bondsmen. Even Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentot" and "Bastaard" commando members, however, were not treated as being the equals of their white counterparts. It is with this theme - the influence of the commando system on the treatment of labourers within the domestic units of the *trekboers* - that the next chapter is concerned.

Commandos and the Colonial Order, 1772-1800

UNFREE LABOUR AND THE COMMANDO SYSTEM

The preparations for the General Commando of 1774 were not solely concerned with deciding the fate of the San. They also mark a crucial stage in defining the status of Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" within the colonial boundaries. In a situation of widespread warfare and commando activity it was very important to define the precise status of all groups within the frontier zone, for whoever was not clearly an ally could well be a foe.

The preliminary meeting of 28 December 1773, on the eve of the General Commando, was of great significance, for here it was realised, from the outset, that nothing could be achieved without the assistance of "good and faithful Hottentots".¹ The reasons for this were that the numbers of the colonists were small whereas the country in which they were fighting was vast, mountainous and unknown. If all European males were away on commando, large areas of the country would be exposed to attack from other groups of Khoisan or from slaves. Friendly Khoikhoi could also assist the commandos since they were more familiar with the country than the colonists and better at tracking down hostile bands in mountainous terrain. They were also more willing than the colonists to clamber up to engage these bands - a fact that had been well-illustrated by the recent success of Captain Kees and his men in the Roggeveld.² The *landdrost* therefore asked that at the next meeting of the *Heemraden* and *Krygsraad*, which the *veldkorporaals* would attend, he be supplied with written returns of the names of those Khoikhoi who could handle a firearm and who were considered to be trustworthy.³

This order was duly observed and at the next meeting, on 28 March 1774, the first item on the agenda was to establish the number of "such able Burghers and Bastard Hottentots" as could be employed on the expedition. It was established that "about 100 Europeans, or Christians, and 150 Bastards and other Hottentots" could be counted on.⁴ Two things are of interest here: the fact that there had been a change in terminology from "Hottentots" to "Bastaard-Hottentots" (or "Bastaards and other Hottentots"); and the fact that the latter outnumbered the Europeans. The

1. Meeting of the combined boards of Landdrost and Heemraden, and the Landdrost and Militia Officers of Stellenbosch, 28 Dec. 1773, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. III, p.20.

2. See chapter 5 above.

3. CA, C 655, 28 Dec. 1773.

4. CA, C 655, 28 March 1774.

shift in terminology is not a trivial point for it indicates that there was a growing realisation that there was a new social category to be accounted for at the Cape. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to state that it was the exigencies of military defence that prompted the official mind to attempt to conceptualise or categorise the phenomena of "Bastaards" or "Bastaard-Hottentots". The words are rarely found in the records before 1774 but are frequently used thereafter. It was important for the authorities to decide what military duties should be expected from - and what civic rights should be given to - people of mixed descent or illegitimate birth (either Khoikhoi-European or Khoikhoi-slave), or both, who could shoot, ride, speak Dutch and profess Christianity. In view of the military crisis the authorities were quick to decide that "Bastaard-Hottentots" and "Bastaards" were eligible for commando service but less quick to grant them equality with the Europeans.⁵

Those "Bastaard-Hottentots" who served on the General Commando of 1774 in the hope that it would enhance their colonial status were speedily disillusioned. Their status was hardly that of trusted equals for the ninety muskets that were made available for their use on the commando were "to be secured at night from the accompanying Hottentots" in locked chests.⁶ It is also evident that Khoikhoi or "Bastaard" auxiliaries were employed in the most dangerous situations on commando.⁷ The consequences of the experience of the General Commando, as far as "Bastaards and Hottentots" were concerned, were profound for it meant that, in future, commando duty would be perceived of as an onerous, perilous imposition rather than as a status-enhancing opportunity.⁸ Despite these drawbacks many Khoikhoi or "Bastaards" continued to serve in commandos after this date and for such people the commando functioned as an institution of colonial acculturation and assimilation. It was better to be a low status member of a commando than a defenceless object of its wrath. Participation in commandos ensured at least temporary possession of guns and horses and taught the participants the skills needed to master them.⁹

5. Penn, "Labour, land and livestock", p.16.

6. CA, C 655, 19 April 1774.

7. This is evident from the many accounts of commandos which we have, from the casualties amongst commando members, and from the high regard in which British officers held Khoikhoi troops when the latter served with British forces on the eastern frontier.

8. In some regions, where Khoisan resistance was not perceived as too great a threat, "Bastaards" were not permitted to join commandos and suffered discrimination from white farmers. In the Swellendam district in 1780, for instance, the burghers Willem Plooy and Frederick Zeele refused to let their sons do commando duty on the grounds that "they were regarded as bastards and consequently, were not judged good enough to participate in this burgher duty". Guelke, "Two Frontier Communities", p.441.

9. Government orders and colonial prejudices prohibited the Khoikhoi from owning either guns or horses so as to prevent them from posing a threat to the colonists. Forbes, *Sparrman*, Vol. 1, pp.227-228.

There was also the future possibility of forming independent commando units beyond the colonial frontier. Only a few years after the General Commando the *veldwagtmeesters* of the northern frontier were complaining that "all the Hottentots and Bastaards fit for commandos are going away to the Namaqua country to evade service on commandos".¹⁰ Many of these fugitives, however, took with them some of the knowledge and values acquired in the hard school of the commando.

The northward movement of "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi away from the colonists was motivated by more than the desire to evade commando service however. There was a deep fear and suspicion amongst them that having one's name recorded by the authorities was a prelude to being enslaved:¹¹ not without reason. For at the same time that the authorities decided that "Bastaard-Hottentots" were a social category subject to military service they turned their attention towards defining their economic status. It was in the same year as the General Commando, 1774, that the question of whether "Bastaard-Hottentots" should carry passes was raised. The *landdrost* of Swellendam argued that deserted slaves were pretending to be "Bastaard-Hottentots" to evade recapture, and that "Bastaard-Hottentots" frequently deserted their masters as well as committed many thefts. The solution, he proposed, was that they should be made to carry passes.¹² Although the Council of Policy postponed deciding on the issue that year, the resolutions passed by the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* of Stellenbosch on 4 September 1775 put the status of "Bastaard-Hottentots" beyond doubt. Referring to the latter as "swervende schepselen" the officials lamented the fact that the women frequently slept with slaves and the masters were obliged to feed the offspring. All too often, before the master could benefit from the child's labour, it was removed by the free parent to the great loss of its master. It was proposed that a child born of a slave father should, on reaching the age of one and a half, be bound to serve the master until the age of twenty-five. The only conditions were that such a child should be well cared for and that its name, its age, its mother's name and its father's name should be recorded.¹³ Significantly, all of these issues had been raised by some burghers of Stellenbosch in 1721, but had lain dormant until this

10. CA, 1/STB 10/164, Briewe van Veldwagtmeesters en Private persone, W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 3 Feb. 1778; Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.77.

11. See for instance the turmoil caused in Namaqualand when the authorities tried to take a list of the local Khoikhoi in 1798. Chapter 10 below.

12. Extract of a letter from the Landdrost and Heemraden of Swellendam to Governor Plettenberg, 25 Oct. 1774, Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.34.

13. CA, C 655, 4 Sept. 1775.

moment.¹⁴ This was the origin of the "Ingeboekte Bastard Hottentotten" and it is not surprising that "Bastaards" should have come to view the recording of their names with such fear.¹⁵

As the military struggle intensified, increasing attempts were made by the government to record the particulars of "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi. The "Rolle der Ingeschrewe Bastard Inboorlinge", which were kept between 1775 and 1805, list a total of 371 such people for the Stellenbosch district.¹⁶ We must assume that there were many who were never listed but who were treated as if they were. In 1781 a resolution was passed that declared that since runaway slaves were still passing themselves off as Khoikhoi, the names of local Khoikhoi should be submitted annually to the *veldwagtmeesters*. Later that year, when war broke out between England and Holland, it was announced that "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi could be called upon to defend the colony. After 1787 Khoikhoi had to carry passes whilst "Bastard-Hottentots" not in service became liable to taxation and had to be placed on the *opgaaf rollen*. Those "Bastard-Hottentots" who refused to participate in commandos were to be arrested and brought to Stellenbosch.¹⁷

The close connection between the social, economic and military status of non-European colonial subjects may thus be seen and the role of the General Commando in defining this status was crucial. Census taking, racial categorisation and conscription lists were all part of the same drive towards greater control by the state over potentially rebellious subjects. It is no coincidence that this attempt to "place" people, who had previously been rather loosely ordered, should occur at a time of intense military crisis. To be unlisted was to be an enemy.

It is hardly surprising that certain colonists, brought up under the ethos of the commando system, should come to regard the Khoikhoi as belonging to the same category as other forms of unfree labour in the frontier zone. In theory the Khoikhoi were free to come and go as they pleased and

14. See chapter 4, p.161 above.

15. See Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, "Inboekselings and Oorlams: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class", in Belinda Bozzoli, (ed.), *Town And Countryside In The Transvaal* (Johannesburg, 1983), pp.53-88, for a discussion of the survival of this system on the nineteenth century highveld. See also V.C. Malherbe, "Indentured and Unfree Labour in South Africa: Towards an Understanding", *South African Historical Journal*, 24, May 1991, pp.3-30.

16. CA, 1/STB 18/195, Rolle der Ingeschrewe Bastard Inboorlinge.

17. Resolutions of the Council of Policy. Resol. 9 March 1781; Resol. 4 and 2 April, and Public. 3 April 1781; Resol. 20 Nov. 1787, in *Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa Within the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, Or Beyond the Frontier of that Colony. Part 1. Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed*, 18 March 1835; CA, C 655, 19 April 1774. In May 1793 all "Hottentots and Bastaards" were again called upon to do military service.

free to hire or withhold their labour at will, being bound only by their contractual agreements with their employers. In practice, however, it was hard to accord the subjugated Khoikhoi any greater rights than were given to the captive San, slaves or the "ingeboekte Bastaard-Hottentots". In the absence of written contracts, abuses were inevitable whilst processes of miscegenation amongst the subject labourers tended to blur their distinct economic status. In the eyes of the masters all non-whites belonged to a common pool of unfree labour.

It is, however, important to be aware that there were different types of unfree labour within the frontier zone, ranging from chattel slavery to informal clientship, and we should be wary about regarding the labour practices applied to any particular group as being either static or inflexible. The frontier zone was an area where categories of status, race and personal identity were in a state of constant flux so it should not surprise us to learn that labour categories were also in a state of fluidity rather than fixity. On the whole though it is true to say that the labour status of those who were regarded as Khoikhoi, San, "Bastaard" or "Bastaard-Hottentot" deteriorated rapidly and irreversibly during the era of the commando - and that this process was itself largely due to the influence of the commando. But we should not conclude from this that all forms of compulsory labour were a form of nascent slavery. There is a tendency in recent historical work, inspired by the revived debate about the nature and origins of the Mfecane, to see slavery, slave raiding and slave trading in places where these had not previously been thought to exist.¹⁸ Such preoccupations have led to a re-examination of the status of Khoikhoi and San labourers within the Cape economy and it is obviously important to reconsider the evidence from the northern Cape frontier zone very carefully.

The Cape was a slave society and slaves were to be found within the frontier zone. But we should not, therefore, assume that it was either necessary or desirable to reduce all unfree labourers to the condition of slavery. Ideas about slavery certainly influenced the treatment of unfree labourers, particularly if they were non-European and thus, seemingly, of the same skin colour as slaves throughout the domain of European global colonisation. But there was little purpose in enslaving Khoikhoi and San if alternative institutions of unfree labour could be created which

18. The work of Julian Cobbing suggests that the disruptions caused to the social systems of the Highveld in the early nineteenth century were not so much caused by the explosive expansion of Zulu imperialism but by slave raiding and slave trading emanating from Delagoa Bay and the Cape colony. In order for this to be the case the practice of slaving across the colonial frontier would have to have been well established, or semi-institutionalised, by the late eighteenth century. For Cobbing's views see J. Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo", *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988, pp.487-519. For further debate on the subject see the essays in Elizabeth Eldredge and Fred Morton, (eds.), *Slavery In South Africa: Captive Labour on the Dutch Frontier* (Boulder, 1994).

ensured the availability, affordability and docility of what became, in effect, a subject population. During the era of the commando such institutions were created and the frontier farmers had little cause to defy the long standing Company ban on the enslavement of the Khoisan.¹⁹

From the earliest years of the colony the authorities in the Netherlands had insisted, despite Van Riebeeck's pleas, that the Khoikhoi were not to be enslaved.²⁰ The ostensible reason for this forbearance was that enslavement of the pastoralist Khoikhoi would antagonise them, thus imperilling the livestock trade and the security of the colony itself. The Dutch reluctance to enslaving the indigenous population was, in this instance, similar to the practice of other colonising powers who established settlements in foreign countries. It was usually counter-productive to enslave a person from a geographically contiguous society since members of that society might thereby be provoked into exceptionally vigorous resistance. Captive slaves would also have a constant incentive to escape and return to the succour of their natal and neighbouring society. It is with pragmatic reasons like this in mind that the sociologist Orlando Patterson has proposed two important preconditions which need to be in existence before a person can be enslaved with any sense of security by another. The slave must, in a sense, be both "socially dead" and "nationally alienated".²¹ By "social death" Patterson means a condition whereby a person has lost all social rights and is, figuratively and symbolically, "dead", or at least a non-member of that society. Such a status (or lack of it) might be achieved by breaking a strict taboo within one's own society (such as by committing incest) or by being physically wrenched from the society of one's birth (by warfare or kidnapping) and placed as a rightless, kinless alien in a foreign society. This latter condition is known as "natal alienation" and implies that the deracinated person is "dead" to his natal society.²²

Quite clearly, these two circumstances did not apply to the Khoikhoi. They could not be regarded as being either "socially dead" or "nationally alienated" since they continued to live in the land of their birth amongst their own people. The situation of captive San was, as we have seen, slightly different, since those San who became labourers on *trekboer* farms were frequently the only survivors of their natal society. But we may note that, in the strict sense of the word, neither the

19. M.I. Finley has stated that one of the conditions for creating a demand for slaves is the unavailability of an internal labour supply. M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London, 1980), p.86. Although Khoisan labour was considered to be in short supply in the Cape frontier zone it none the less existed, and the solution was not to enslave the Khoisan but to ensure their bondage by other means.

20. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.181.

21. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982) pp.35-76.

22. Ibid.

Khoikhoi nor the San were enslaved. Here it is instructive to follow the lead of M.I. Finley and the distinction which he made between slavery and other forms of involuntary labour. For Finley the most important distinction is that:

as a commodity, the slave is property ... some sociologists and historians have persistently tried to deny the significance of that simple fact, on the grounds that the slave is also a human being or that the owner's rights over a slave are restricted by the law. All this seems to me to be futile: the fact that a slave is a human being has no relevance to the question whether or not he is also property: it simply reveals that he is a peculiar property, Aristotle's "property with a soul".²³

The Khoikhoi and the San were not chattel slaves, nor property, for they could not be bought and sold on the market - at least not legally. There were some instances in which San, usually children, were treated as chattels and "given" by one person to another.²⁴ Strictly speaking, however, such transactions were rare, illegal and cloaked in the guise of more characteristic forms of unfree labour in the frontier zone. San captives were expected to be treated in the same way as "ingeboekte Bastaard-Hottentots" and were listed in a similar manner to that of the "Bastaard-Hottentots".²⁵ The *landdrost* was supposed to grant permission for San to be placed with a colonist and though we can assume that this requirement was frequently ignored the legal situation was unambiguous: the Khoikhoi and San were not to be enslaved.

But as the violence of the frontier became institutionalised and commandos an almost everyday occurrence, the situation and treatment of all forms of unfree labour within the frontier zone deteriorated. Common perceptions were not as punctilious about legal niceties as the statute books. Even an educated visitor like Sparrman, who visited the Cape in the 1770s, might be excused for making the following remark: "In these times, when the Hottentots for the greater part are slaves, it is not to be wondered at, that their manners are subject to changes".²⁶ Thunberg, more accurately, observed that:

The Hottentots are considered as allies, and not suffered to be made slaves of; but such Hottentots as are taken prisoner in war, especially if young, are for some time the property of the captor, and obliged to serve without wage, but are not to be disposed of to others. If any of the colonists take an Hottentot orphan to bring up, it must serve, it is true, without wages, till it is twenty-five years old; but, on arriving

23. Finley, p.73.

24. See below, p.229.

25. CA, I/STB 18/196, Lyst der Sodanige Persoonen dewelke volgens permissie van den Heere Landdrost hunne bij hint woonagtig - Bosjesmans Hottentoten van sekere bepaalde jaaren in haar dienst mogen houden. But see pp.223 above.

26. Forbes, *Sparrman*, Vol.1, p.322.

at that age, it is at liberty to go where it pleases, or to continue in service at a stated salary.²⁷

By the end of the eighteenth century Barrow, the most reliable of witnesses, believed that:

By a resolution of the old government, as unjust as it was inhuman, a peasant was allowed to claim as his property, till the age of five-and-twenty, all the children of the Hottentots in his service to whom he had given in their infancy a morsel of meat. At the expiration of this period the odds are ten to one that the slave is not emancipated. A Hottentot knows nothing of his age; "he takes no note of time". And though the spirit that dictated this humane law expanded its beneficence in favour of the Hottentot by directing the farmer to register the birth of such children as he may intend to make his slaves, yet it seldom happens, removed as many of them are to the distance of ten or twelve days' journey from the Drostdy, that the Hottentot has an opportunity of inquiring when his servitude will expire; and indeed it is a chance if he thinks upon or even knows the existence of such a resource. Should he be fortunate enough to escape at the end of this period, the best part of his life has been spent in profitless servitude, and he is turned adrift in the declines of life (for a Hottentot begins to grow old at thirty) without an earthly thing he can call his own except the sheep skin upon his back.²⁸

It is interesting to note how, according to Barrow, the status of "Bastaard-Hottentot" had been extended to all Khoikhoi children by the end of the century. Even if his is an exaggerated account its significance lies in the fact that he believed it to be true. Certainly, as we consider the available evidence more closely, we shall find little to contradict Barrow's impression of the declining status of the Khoikhoi. Since the situation of San, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" has already received some attention it is now time to turn more detailed attention to the Khoikhoi.²⁹ Although it is not always possible to distinguish between Khoikhoi and San (or, for that matter, between Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots") within the frontier zone it is more convenient for our purposes to discuss the experience of Khoikhoi within the colony separately from the experience of San societies outside of the colony. It should be remembered, however, that the two were linked, particularly by that institution that operated both within and beyond the colonial boundaries: the commando.

27. Forbes, *Thunberg*, p.291.

28. Barrow, *Travels*, p.146.

29. See pp.158-165 above for details of the declining status of "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots". See also pp.288-295 below.

KHOIKHOI DURING THE COMMANDO ERA

By the 1770s most of the Khoikhoi within the colony were working as labourers for white farmers. The best land within the winter rainfall area of the Cape was in white hands and the Khoikhoi were only allowed onto it if they were prepared to serve the new owners. Those Khoikhoi who continued to eke out an existence as independent pastoralists did so in marginal areas, with declining stock, and on sufferance from the more powerful colonists about them. They were, in most respects, a subject people, obliged to accept the terms which were imposed upon them and at the mercy of the colonists.

Early in the eighteenth century the Company had come to accept the fact that, as conquered subjects, the Khoikhoi were entitled to a degree of colonial justice. Some of the initial efforts of the authorities at the Cape - to protect the Khoikhoi from violent excesses at the hands of lawless colonists - have already been described.³⁰ Even after the frontier war of 1739 the official theory was that the Khoikhoi were to be attracted to work for the colonists by kindness rather than by coercion,³¹ but these good intentions, largely ineffectual at the best of times, became more difficult to implement once the colony's frontiers had expanded to the distant regions of Namaqualand and the Roggeveld. Between 1740 and 1770 there are occasional instances of colonists being brought to book for the mistreatment of Khoikhoi labourers and the principle was accepted that the Khoikhoi ought to be paid, no matter how little, for their labour. Wages varied from contract to contract and cash and kine were equally acceptable by the middle of the century. Twelve Rijksdaalders a year is one example of a wage that was offered in both 1749 and in the 1790s.³² Sparrman records that Khoikhoi who worked on a Company farm in the 1770s received the yearly wages, besides food and tobacco, of "a ewe or two with lamb, or a heifer with calf, or else the value of them in money".³³ Other farmers did not offer cash and as late as 1800, in the remote districts of the Roggeveld and Bokkeveld, Khoikhoi labourers could expect to be paid in an assortment of ewes (between one or six per person a year), clothes, beads and tinder-boxes for their labour. All too many appear to have received nothing except "kos en kleren", i.e., food and clothes.³⁴

30. See chapter 2, pp.76-81 above.

31. In 1748, for instance, Commissioner Nolthenius urged the Governor and his Council not to alienate the Khoikhoi but "door vriendelijkheid aangelokt werden om den boer zijn werk te hepen verigten door behoorlijk loon". Quoted by Boeseken, "Nederlandse Kommissaris", p.43.

32. Ibid., p.77 and n.34.

33. Forbes, *Sparrman*, Vol. 1, p.181.

34. The wages of a great many frontier Khoikhoi around the year 1800 may be found listed in the *opgaaf* lists contained in CA, 1/STB 10/150, Inkomende Briewe van Veldwagmeesters en Private Persone.

The Diedericks' case of 1763 is evidence that the Company did not feel it could turn a blind eye to the barbaric murder of Khoikhoi servants by sadistic frontiersmen.³⁵ Dideriks was banished to Robben Island for twenty-five years and there are several other examples from the 1760s where Dutch colonists were expelled from the Cape, and even sentenced to death, for the murder of a Khoikhoi.³⁶ There is also evidence of the Company's concern for the rights of the Khoikhoi in the instructions which the Council of Policy sent to the *landdrost* of Swellendam in 1768. He was advised that he should not only be vigilant in acting against the mistreatment of the Khoikhoi but that he should also ensure that they were not prevented, by intimidation or hindrance, from presenting their grievances before the authorities.³⁷ Such instructions were, of course, tacit recognition of the fact that Khoikhoi were being mistreated and prevented from seeking justice. The situation became much worse, however, during the period of protracted military crisis which began in the 1770s.

We have already seen how almost continuous compulsory commando service added to the hardships which Khoikhoi labourers had to bear.³⁸ We have also noted how regulations and restrictions, which were first applied to "Bastaard-Hottentots" in order to ensure their military availability, were later applied to the Khoikhoi as well. A further influence which became apparent as the frontier zone became a war zone was that violence came to permeate every aspect of life, particularly the way in which the Khoikhoi were treated.

It is difficult to quantify or qualify this statement precisely, even though the records bear testimony to an increase in both the number of incidents of violence and an intensification in the cruelty with which the Khoikhoi were treated. It might be argued that this impression is simply the result of better documentation for the years after 1770. It might also be argued that the real reason for this increased oppression was not simply the climate of ceaseless military struggle but a situation of economic distress which caused the colonists to increase the level of exploitation of their Khoikhoi labourers. At the most fundamental level military and economic aspects were certainly intertwined since prosperity, in a pastoralist society, was dependent on an expanding frontier. Once the frontier ceased to advance greater pressures would be placed upon all those reliant on gaining access to resources of land, labour and livestock. But the basic point to be

35. See chapter 5 above.

36. Boeseken, "Nederlandse Kommissaris", p.78.

37. Ibid., p.77. See also Wayne Dooling, *Law and Community in a Slave Society: Stellenbosch District, South Africa, c.1760-1820* (Cape Town, 1992), pp.29-40 and 63-64 for a discussion about the legal status of Khoikhoi and the cases in question.

38. See chapter 5, p.201 above.

made here is that increased levels of domestic violence were a concomitant of the escalation of military violence.

One of the first examples which illustrates this inter-connection is that of the conduct of Carel Hendrik Buijtendag of the Koue Bokkeveld. At the same time as the General Commando was attempting to pacify the San, Buijtendag was busy treating his Khoikhoi labourers with the utmost brutality. He withheld their wages, prevented them from leaving his service and beat to death those he thought guilty of negligence.³⁹ One cannot help thinking that Buijtendag was inspired to his acts of cruelty by the knowledge that people like his neighbour, *Veldwagtmeester* Nicolaas van der Merwe, were busy exterminating San with impunity on the General Commando. Ironically, Buijtendag would probably never have been brought to judgement were it not that he had antagonised Van der Merwe, and other burghers of the Koue Bokkeveld, by interfering with their own control over the Khoikhoi labourers of the district. Buijtendag was expelled from the Koue Bokkeveld but his expulsion did not mean that the lot of the Khoikhoi improved.⁴⁰ Far from it.

By far the most common complaint of Khoikhoi labourers in the frontier zone was that they could not leave the service of a white farmer once their period of contract had expired. They would sometimes suffer a crude form of physical restraint but a far more effective means of control was to prevent the departure of a man's wife and children. With his family held as hostage a man had little joy in freedom of movement. If a man was without family ties he might yet be reluctant to leave a master's employment when that master, as often happened, refused to pay him his wages - unless he worked for a further term. By the end of the century this practice had become so prevalent as to be the norm. Early in the nineteenth century Colonel Collins commented as such:

A Hottentot can now seldom get away at the expiration of his term. If he should happen not to be in debt to his master, which he must have more caution than is characteristic of his race to prevent, he is not allowed to take his children, or he is detained under some frivolous pretence, such as that of cattle having died through his neglect, and he is not permitted to satisfy any demands of this nature otherwise than by personal service.⁴¹

39. See N.G. Penn, "Anarchy and Authority in the Koue Bokkeveld, 1739-1779: the Banishing of Carel Buijtendag", *Kleio*, XV11, 1985, pp.24-43, for a full discussion of this case.

40. Ibid.

41. Collins, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. V, p.22.

The emphasis which colonial farmers placed on restricting the freedom of movement of the Khoikhoi suggests both that labour was scarce and very necessary to the *trekboer* economy.⁴² We should not, however, believe that there was a simple correlation between the number of units of labour a farmer could command, the number of units of stock which could therefore be maintained, and the size of the profit which would thus be realised. To some extent this was the case but in African societies a man's status was frequently linked to the size of his following. Social and political power, not only economic power, flowed from the control of people.⁴³ In this respect *trekboers* who sought to augment the numbers of their "volk" were motivated by the same impulses as those which had motivated the Khoikhoi chieftains whom they had replaced. The logic of the frontier was not always the same as the logic of the market. The competition of frontier farmers for Khoikhoi labour frequently contributed, paradoxically, to the instability of the labour supply. Khoikhoi were sometimes tempted to seek a better life elsewhere. Such a life was not always necessarily beyond the limits of the colony. There were occasions when a Khoikhoi labourer sought to leave a farmer simply in order to search for higher wages or better conditions of service. The fact that some farmers were in a position to offer these caused considerable confusion concerning the allegedly "free" status of the Khoikhoi. This is well illustrated in a letter which *Veldkorporaal* Botma wrote in 1779:

I also request to be instructed how to act in such cases as this. Hottentots deserting from one person and going to another, and then the men come to me for my assistance to get back their servants, as has happened today with Antonie Botes, and the servant of Pieter van der Byl, named J. Stols, who has a Hottentot of Botes, and Botes demands the Hottentot, and the said Stols will not give him up, and says they are a free people who may live where they will; and then I asked him if that was his reason for keeping the Hottentot? and he then said not exactly that, but we agreed together that I should keep the Hottentot.⁴⁴

In this instance the judgement that was passed concerning the allocation of Khoikhoi labour favoured the man who, by virtue of his control over the local commando, had the most power: the *veldkorporaal* himself. Indeed, as time went by the commando was not only used to acquire labour from beyond the colonial frontier. It was also used as a force within the colonial frontier, whose function it was to keep subjugated labourers docile and to ensure that the labour requirements of commando members were met. An incident from 1792 illustrates both the

42. A point made by Barrow in his *Travels*, pp.162-163.

43. This is a point made by many of those who have written on indigenous slavery in Africa. See for instance P.E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1991) and C. Meillassaux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: the Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago, 1991).

44. C. Botma to Landdrost, 7 Dec. 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.88.

declining status of Khoikhoi labourers and the way the commando system could be adapted to cater for the labour requirements of local frontier farmers.

In July 1792 two Khoikhoi men, the cousins Piet Pieterse and Jantje Mattroos, were at a kraal on a farm belonging to Barend Pienaar. Pieterse had worked for *Veldwagtmeester* Pieter Jacobs for eight years but in 1791 had got permission from Jacobs to go and visit his brother. He took his entire family with him but returned after a few months to enquire of Jacobs' mother, the widow Jacobs, whether there was a farm for him to graze his stock. He was told that there was none to be had so he left, after a polite farewell, for Barend Pienaar's farm.⁴⁵ Jantje Mattroos had been hired to work for a two year period by Jonathan Fourie of the Touw. After two and a half years he asked whether he could go and visit some friends. Fourie refused him permission but Mattroos left anyway, visiting another cousin of his, Maurits, on the farm of widow Jacobs. From here he went, with Pieterse and two other Khoikhoi named Cupido and Hendrik, to the kraal at Barend Pienaar's farm.⁴⁶

One morning at about eight o'clock a group of eight mounted men, led by *Veldwagtmeester* Pieter Jacobs, approached the kraal. There were four Europeans and four Khoikhoi. To Pieterse and Mattroos it looked exactly like a commando on the warpath. Mattroos panicked, fearful that it was coming to attack them instead of the San. He ran away and hid himself behind the kraal, but his flight was seen. One of the commando members, Stephanus Jacobs, hauled him out and drove him, with many blows of his *sjambok*, into the open. He then clubbed the elderly Mattroos to the ground with the butt of his flintlock, opening a large wound in the man's skull. On instructions from *Veldwagtmeester* Jacobs the four Khoikhoi commando members held down Pieterse, Mattroos, Cupido and Hendrik whilst Pieter Jacobs and Philip Rasmus flogged them with a *sjambok* for a good half an hour. At the end of this beating Pieter Jacobs ordered Pieterse to lift up Mattroos, who was quite unable to stand, and declared that if he could not walk he would be tied behind his horse and dragged away. Rasmus gave Mattroos a piece of bread in order to encourage him but when the Khoikhoi could not take it he was given a kick and a further blow from the *sjambok* instead. The white masters then declared that Mattroos must be a "schelm" because he had tried to run away. In the end, though, they did not drag him off, perhaps because of his weakened condition. He had wounds about his head and left eye as well as a huge wound

45. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interrogatorien (Krimineel), 1786-1793, Relas van Hottentot Piet Pieterse, 25 July, 1792. From the loan-farm records it would appear as though Barend Pienaar's farm was "Verkeerde Valley" in the Bokkeveld. CA, RLR 34, p.2.

46. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Jantje Mattroos, 25 July 1792.

on his back that was still visible two weeks later. He was, in addition, unable to use his fingers for in the past, whilst working for Jacobus Mijburg in the Roggeveld, a flintlock had exploded in his hands and shattered them. Cupido, however, was not so incapacitated and the commando took him away, forcing him to work for Stephanus Jacobs even though he was hired to someone else.⁴⁷

Shortly after this Pieter Jacobs seized two young children from Pieterse's wife when the latter was visiting her parents on Jacob's farm. This obliged the woman to stay on the farm as well. When Pieterse went to ask Jacobs when his wife and children would be freed the answer was: "When you hire yourself to Philip Rasmus". Since Pieterse was already hired to Barend Pienaar he did not know what to do and it was doubtless at the urging of Pienaar that he went before the *landdrost* to complain.⁴⁸

It may be seen from the above that commandos were sometimes used to keep Khoikhoi labourers from working for certain farmers and firmly bound to others. In this case the commando was dominated by the Jacobs family (the Jacobses were related by marriage to the Rasmuses, or, Erasmuses)⁴⁹ and served its interests. But even without the backing of a commando behind them farmers of the frontier zone were used to treating their Khoikhoi servants as though their contracts had limitless duration. The situation was particularly bad in the Roggeveld and Bokkeveld and it is no coincidence that these were districts in which there was constant commando activity. Numerous examples could be cited to support this contention but a few will suffice. Two Khoikhoi servants of Willem Sterrenberg Pretorius had worked for him for over ten years. At the end of this period they were prevented from leaving with their wages despite having received the *landdrost's* permission. Pretorius flogged them severely and withheld all but a fraction of their earnings.⁵⁰ In March 1794 the authorities learnt of a young Khoikhoi lad, Jantje, who had been taken from his uncle at least five times, beaten and chained by Willem Steenkamp of the Roggeveld.⁵¹ That same year Toontje, who worked for Pieter Jooste of the Bokkeveld, wanted to leave and take his wife, Else, with him. Jooste informed him that Else was "ingeboek", or a "Bastaard-Hottentot" and could not leave. Toontje took the matter to the *landdrost* who confirmed to Toontje that Else did indeed have to stay with Jooste. Toontje, though, was free, and

47. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Piet Pieterse and Jantje Matroos, 25 July 1792.

48. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Piet Pieterse, 25 July 1792. The Jacobs family farm was "Het Drogeland" in the Agter Bokkeveld. CA, RLR 37, p.62.

49. De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 1, pp.354-355 and 204. Philip Rasmus's sister, Martha Francina, was married to Danie, brother of Pieter and Stephanus Jacobs.

50. CA, 1/STB 3/13 Krimineele Verklaaringen, 1793-1796, Relas van Hottentots Wildchut en Frederik Platje, 5 March 1794.

51. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Relas van Hottentot Jantje, 24 March 1794.

he tried to get a nearby farmer, Wessel Pretorius, to hire him. When Jooste heard of Toontje's insolent initiative he attempted to tie him up and, after he broke free, shot at him. Fortunately Pretorius intervened and deflected the gun, but Jooste withheld twenty sheep and a horse that rightfully belonged to Toontje.⁵²

It was not only in the withholding of wages or the restriction of freedom of movement that ill treatment of Khoikhoi labourers was evident. Many instances have already been given of the savage punishments which were afflicted upon the Khoikhoi by their masters. Barrow remarked that:

Beating and cutting with thongs of the hide of the sea-cow or rhinoceros, are only gentle punishments; though these sort of whips, which they call sjambocs, are most horrid instruments, being tough, pliant, and heavy almost as lead. Firing small shot into the legs and thighs of a Hottentot, is a punishment not unknown to these monsters... Instant death is not unfrequently the consequence of punishing these poor wretches in a moment of rage. This is of little consequence to the farmer; for though they are to all intents and purposes his slaves, yet they are not transferable property. It is this circumstance which, in his mind, makes their lives less valuable and their treatment more inhuman.⁵³

The cruelties which Barrow describes (and which are well documented in the archival records) would seem to have been fuelled by an extraordinary animus. There was clearly more at issue here than the desire to screw the maximum amount of labour from a person. Unbridled economic exploitation does not necessarily entail the maiming or destruction of one's own labour force. The alleged idleness of the Khoikhoi, which had reached legendary proportions both within and beyond the colony, may have provoked some farmers into acts of savagery but, given the scarcity of Khoikhoi labour, such behaviour seems self-defeating.⁵⁴ Barrow noted that the Khoikhoi were treated far worse than slaves and he was not the only observer to do so. This, indeed, is an instance where the non-slave status of the Khoikhoi counted against them for a slave, being property, had value whereas the Khoikhoi labourer, not being a slave, had less value. Andries Stockenström wrote perceptively on this point when questioned by the Aborigines Protection Society in 1835:

52. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Relas van Hottentottin Cattryn en Relas van Hottentot Toontje, 24 Nov. 1794.

53. Barrow, *Travels*, p.145.

54. For some of the many references to idleness amongst the Khoikhoi see Barrow, *Travels*, pp.144 and 152; Forbes, *Thunberg*, pp.174 and 316; Forbes, *Sparrman*, Vol. 1, p.210. See also J.M. Coetzee "Idleness in South Africa" in J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (Sandton, 1988), pp.12-35.

...Hottentots ... were decidedly in a more degraded condition than the slaves, in every respect, except that they were not saleable, and this very advantage was itself the cause of that greater degradation. They were employed in every species of occupation in which slaves were employed, subject to the same description of coercion and punishment; they were certainly not so well fed as the slaves, and seldom clad; there was not that interest to render them comfortable which operated in favour of the slaves; the dangers and privation to which the slave owner would never think of exposing the slave would be forced upon the Hottentot without scruple or hesitation.⁵⁵

But it was not simply their non-slave status which caused Khoikhoi to be treated so badly and the question remains: why were so many frontier farmers so cruel to their labourers? Susan Newton-King has considered the plight of the Khoisan labourers of the eastern Cape frontier zone between the years 1760 and 1799 with a similar question in mind. In her pioneering and painstaking work she has conclusively proved the close connections which existed between the frontier farmers of the eastern Cape and the market economy based on Cape Town.⁵⁶ She has demonstrated that, on the whole, during her period of enquiry, the majority of farmers were experiencing real difficulties in paying for the necessary commodities which bound them to the Cape Town market. Poverty and hardship were the order of the day and she speculates that economic pressures and financial insecurity were some of the main factors which caused frontier settlers to increase the level of exploitation of their Khoisan labourers.⁵⁷

Newton-King's detailed, statistical research into the economics of frontier life is certain to remain unassailable for many years to come and her picture of shrinking profit margins is no doubt correct. It is also, no doubt, possible to extrapolate such findings to the northern frontier zone of the Cape, for although this region was more marginal, and of smaller economic significance, than the eastern frontier zone the same economic forces would have applied. Indeed, the region's greater poverty and harsher environmental conditions might even have exacerbated the problems. It should, however, be noted that it is possible for historians to draw the conclusions of their choice from quite contradictory sets of data. If, for instance, Newton-King's research had shown a broadly based tendency to increasing prosperity in the eastern frontier regions it would not have been too difficult to argue that a logical response to such a boom period would have been for

55. Captain A. Stockenström, Minutes Of Evidence Before Select Committee On Aborigines (British Settlements), 28 Aug. 1835, in *Report From The Select Committee On Aborigines (British Settlements), Imperial Blue Book, 1836 nr VII*, 538 Facsimile Reprint (Cape Town, 1966), p.153.

56. Susan Newton-King, "The Enemy Within: The struggle for ascendancy on the Cape Eastern frontier 1760-1799" (PhD, University of London, 1992).

57. *Ibid.*, pp.315-356.

settlers to increase the level of exploitation of their labour. This is merely a hypothesis and should not suggest that Newton-King is wrong. It is simply a reminder to be cautious about interpreting and applying economic data and to be alert to the fact that the mistreatment of labour on the frontier might have more than one explanation. Newton-King is herself aware of these difficulties and suggests two other reasons, closely interlinked, to account for *trekboer* barbarities. The first of these is the notion that the frontier settlers regarded the Khoisan as a species of heathen "other", or "schepsel". The second is that the endemic violence of the frontier, with its almost continuous war between colonists and Khoisan, contributed to an atmosphere in which "the other" was also regarded as "the enemy".⁵⁸ These interlinked concepts are ones that have long informed our understanding of the dynamics of the Cape frontier zone. They constitute, in fact, a cornerstone of the "frontier thesis" against which Legassick cautioned in the 1970s.⁵⁹ They retain, however, great explanatory value and Newton-King is surely correct to stress them. Quite clearly there was a combination of forces contributing to the cruel treatment of the Khoisan: economic exploitation, "racist" ideology and a state of continuous warfare within the frontier zone. The institution of the commando exemplified this trilogy and it is for this reason that it remains central to our concerns.

By the 1780s and 1790s the pressures upon Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots" within the colony had reached intolerable levels. Increasingly the oppressed labourers of the frontier zone sought to resist their bondage by flight, protest to the authorities or rebellion. Of these forms of resistance flight, or desertion, was the most common and the frontier farmers would sometimes sooner kill a Khoikhoi labourer than permit him to escape. This was particularly likely if the farmers suspected that the absconding servant was going to complain to the authorities. Since most of our knowledge about the abuse of Khoikhoi labourers is derived from the testimony of Khoikhoi who did succeed in reaching the Stellenbosch *drostdy* to complain it is clear that not all complainants were prevented from seeking justice. A study of court records from the 1770s until the beginning of the nineteenth century suggests that a Khoikhoi complainant frequently had a white farmer behind him who had urged him to report his grievances.⁶⁰ Such support usually meant that a particular farmer or *veldwagtmeester* had had enough of the anti-social behaviour of one of his neighbours, particularly if this interfered with his own claims to Khoikhoi labour or

58. Ibid., see especially chapters 4, 5 and 6.

59. Newton-King discusses this point in her postscript, p.392.

60. For instance, when the children of the female Khoikhoi Cattryn were taken from her by force by some Bokkeveld farmers the widow Pretorius, with whom she was staying, insisted that they needed written orders from the government. When they kidnapped them regardless the widow urged Cattryn to go to the authorities. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Relas van Hottentotin Cattryn, 22 May 1794.

undermined his authority. This was clearly the case in the Buijtendag trial of the 1770s and it was also the case with Jochem Scholtz, whose humiliation of the *veldwagtmeesters* or *veld cornets* of the Roggeveld brought him under official scrutiny towards the turn of the century.⁶¹

It is significant that the number of Khoikhoi whose complaints were recorded at Stellenbosch increased from about 1792 onwards. This could either mean that brutality was on the increase or that the Khoikhoi were encouraged by rumours of reform (attendant on the arrival of Commissioners Nederburgh and Frijkenius in 1792 and the enquiries into crimes against the Khoikhoi initiated by Commissioner Sluysken in 1793)⁶² to bring their complaints before the authorities. In fact, a combination of both increased brutality and official vigilance is the most likely reason for the upsurge in recorded Khoikhoi complaints after 1792. We should also note that the late 1780s and early 1790s were years of economic crisis at the Cape and this would seem to support Newton-King's argument about the correlation between economic hardship and greater oppression of the labour force.⁶³ After the British occupation in 1795, and an economic boom, there was a renewed emphasis on more humane treatment for the Khoikhoi and the government urged for greater vigilance from the frontier officials and *landdrosts*. The exasperation of *Landdrost* van der Riet of Stellenbosch, in a letter which he wrote to the *veld cornet* of the Middle Roggeveld in 1799, is testimony to the new spirit of official concern for Khoikhoi rights by that date. It was also a long overdue attempt to clarify the legal status of the Khoikhoi:

Ik kan ook niet om heer myn verwondering u. w. te betuigen, waar een zoodanig ordre van daan komt dat een Hottentot een pas hebben moet, dit versta ik volstrekt niet, zy zyn vrij, en as zy hun tydt hebben uijtgedient begeer ik dat zy gaan zullen, waar en ziy wie zy willen.⁶⁴

In this instance, the chief cause of the *landdrost's* wrath was Jochem Scholtz of the Roggeveld.⁶⁵ Scholtz had the reputation of being one of the biggest trouble-makers in the Roggeveld, and not

61. For Buijtendag see Penn, "Buijtendag" and for Scholtz see below pp.270-272, 427.

62. Boeseken, "Nederlandse Kommissarisse", pp.85-92.

63. For the idea of a widespread colonial crisis at this time see Andre du Toit and Hermann Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought: Analysis and Documents*, Vol. 1 1780-1850 (Cape Town, 1983), pp.28-39. For a more specific consideration of the financial and administrative chaos of the colony on the eve of the British occupation see M. Boucher and N. Penn (eds.), *Britain at the Cape 1795-1803* (Johannesburg, 1992), pp.125-133.

64. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Uitgaande Briewe van Landdrosts, Nov. 1795-Dec. 1801, Landdrost to F. Visser, 10 Jan. 1799. "I also cannot help expressing my surprise to you about where such an order came from that a Hottentot must have a pass, I do not understand that at all; they are free, and my wish is that, if they have served their time, they should be allowed to go wherever they wish."

65. For Scholtz see Penn, "Droster Gangs", pp.20-40.

just because of his bulk. He was, as it happened, "a man of immense size, so much so that he could not wear the usual articles of clothing; his daily dress was a night gown and a shirt".⁶⁶ By the 1790s Scholtz had registered three farms along the Riet River in the Roggeveld and at least one other in the Skurweberg.⁶⁷ His father had farmed in the district since 1756⁶⁸ and his brother, Hermanus, was nearby to lend a hand.⁶⁹ The two brothers had a history of mistreatment of their labour and were plagued by desertions.⁷⁰ In 1799 Scholtz had employed a certain Cupido Jantje for thirteen years but would not release him, his wife, his children nor his livestock. Van der Riet threatened to send dragoons to force Scholtz to comply with his orders.⁷¹ But, for the most part, official action against those who had withheld Khoikhoi wages or restricted their freedom of movement amounted to a letter from the *landdrost* ordering them to rectify their error immediately. If this letter was ignored the local *veldwagtmeester* might be asked to intervene and if his authority was challenged there was frequently an impasse. Scholtz, for instance, actually struck *veld cornet* Gerrit Maritz in 1801 after repeated official complaints about the way in which Scholtz treated his labourers and ignored hunting restrictions.⁷² Since Scholtz was of gigantic proportions there was little that Maritz could do except to decline the offer to continue

66. These are the observations of Petrus Borchardus Borchers who encountered Scholtz whilst travelling through the Skurweberg in March 1802. P.B. Borchers, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (Cape Town, 1861), p.107.

67. Scholtz's farms were "de Eende Kuijl - agter de Roggeveld aan de Riet Rivier", "de Elandsberg - agter de Roggeveld aan de Riet Rivier" and "de Baviaans Drift - agter op de Roggeveld aan de Riet Rivier". CA, RLR 34, 28 Feb. 1786, p.154 and 24 July 1785; RLR 36, 6 July 1790, p.232. "Elandsberg" and "Eendekuijl" were taken over by the Olivier family in 1787 and 1788. Borchers described Scholtz's farmhouse in the Skurweberg in 1802. (See note 66 above).

68. Scholtz was known as Jochem (or Joachim) the younger since his father, Jan Joachim, was also called Jochem. Jochem senior registered "Roggecloof" in the Roggeveld on 9 Sept. 1756 (CA, RLR 14, p.180). It is probable that he retired from farming in 1784 when his current farm, "Droogeland", was taken over by Dan Jacobs (CA, RLR 31, p.86). See De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 2, p.856 for the Scholtz family genealogy.

69. Hermanus registered "de Matjes Cloof aan de Klipfontein geleegend in Middelste Roggeveld" in 1776 (CA, RLR 24, p.75). He was eight years older than Jochem.

70. See Penn, "Droster Gangs" for an account of the adventures of Adam, the *droster* slave who fled from Jochem Scholtz in 1793. In 1792 a group of Khoikhoi deserted from Hermanus Scholtz and were so afraid of being recaptured that they killed one of their own babies to stop it from crying and thereby giving away their hiding place. Penn, "Droster Gangs", pp.22-23; CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relaa van Hottentot Jan Swart, 22 June 1793.

71. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Scholtz, 10 Jan. 1799. On this occasion the *landdrost* delivered the following significant remarks: "Ik kan my niet genoeg [?] deser dat men by u in het veld mit een idee belieft is als of een Hottentot eens by ejmand in dienst verhuurt is, verplig is gedurende zyn leeftyd te blyven dienen". (I cannot content myself with the knowledge that there are men in the field with you who have the idea that a Hottentot, once hired by somebody, is compelled to keep serving for a lifetime). Scholtz's outraged reply to the accusations of the "schelm Hottentot" (who, according to Scholtz, had not only stolen guns, horses and oxen from him whilst deserting but abandoned his real wife for a whore) may be read in CA, 1/STB 10/150, Briewe van Veldkomete en Private Persone, 1787-1801, Scholtz to Landdrost, 15 Oct. 1799.

72. See p.427 below for the context of this incident.

the fight out of sight of witnesses. The "gewelt hebbber in moetwillige rust verstoorder" actually had the audacity to write to the *landdrost* telling him to keep his "veldwagters" off his farm.⁷³

Scholtz's strength and distance from the *drostdy* of Stellenbosch seem to have enabled him to do as he pleased. It would be a long time before the authorities in Cape Town or Stellenbosch would be able to protect the unfree labourers of the frontier zone from the cruelties of their masters and for many it was much too late. Not all Khoikhoi either dared to, or succeeded in, registering their grievances with the *landdrost*. The story of Claas Cupido is a grim reminder of the fate of other, less fortunate supplicants.

Cupido had worked for Frederik Spangenberg in the Hantam for four years. In 1794, at the end of his period of service, he wanted to leave so that he could hire himself to Joseph Spangenberg for higher wages. On leaving Frederik Spangenberg Cupido was owed four sheep and an ox, but these were withheld from him. Taking his wife and children with him he decided to go and complain to the authorities. About an hour after leaving Frederik Spangenberg's farm Cupido and his family were stopped by some horsemen. There were three men, Andries Gous, Hannes Gous and their Khoikhoi servant Constapel. All had guns. Andries Gous asked Cupido where he was going and he replied that he was going "naar boven de Groot Baas"(to the big boss).⁷⁴

"What are you going to do there?" asked Andries Gous.

"You know yourself Baas how it is with me, that Spangenberg won't give me my livestock."

The three men climbed off their horses and Hannes Gous said to Constapel: "Toe, schiet klon."

As Cupido heard these words the moisture left his throat ("die damp uit de keel vlieg").

"Dit is leelyk Baas om mak volk te scheeten," protested the unhappy Constapel.

"Hottentot schiet, of ik sal jouw ribben met de kogel sniessen," Gous replied mercilessly.

Whilst Constapel reluctantly loaded his gun he contrived to let it off harmlessly. The impatient Hannes Gous then took his own musket and, loading deliberately, said: "Wagt Hottentot nou sal ik jou schieten want myn snelden is goet".⁷⁵

He fired. The bullet passed through Cupido's body without dropping him. Gous reloaded and shot again. This time the bullet went through Cupido's right leg and he fell to earth. The Gouses and

73. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Briewe van Veld Kometten en Private Personen, 1801-1802, C. Esterhijse, N. Olivier and A. Olivier to Landdrost, 15 Feb. 1801; G. Maritz to Landdrost, 15 Feb. 1801; G. Maritz to Landdrost, 13 August 1801. Maritz referred to Scholtz as a "tyrant and mischievous disturber of the peace".

74. CA, 1/STB 3/13 Relas of Hottentot Claas Cupido, 24 Nov. 1794.

75. The English translation of the Dutch is as follows: "Right, shoot klon." (A "klonkie" is a vulgar expression for a coloured boy). "It is ugly, Boss, to shoot tame people." "I Hottentot shoot or I'll cut your ribs with a bullet." "Wait Hottentot, now I'll shoot you because my aim is good."

Constapel rode away, leaving Cupido to be tended by his family. Miraculously he recovered sufficiently to make the long journey southwards to tell his tale.⁷⁶

Quite why it was the Gouses (and not Frederik Spangenberg) who tried to kill Cupido is not clear for their relationship with Spangenberg cannot be established. Their actions, however, were obviously aimed at preventing Cupido from testifying and their scant respect for Khoikhoi life was an indication that the distinctions between "mak", or "tame" Khoikhoi and "wilde", or "wild" Khoikhoi had broken down. This distinction, and that between "Bastaards" and independent (and therefore potentially dangerous) Khoikhoi had already been wearing thin in the early 1770s - as the evidence for the causes of the Roggeveld rebellion reveals.⁷⁷ Frontier farmers obviously felt that it was quite legitimate to regard any troublesome Khoikhoi as an enemy and that they could therefore be dealt with as a commando would have dealt with a foe. The incident suggests that there must have been many Khoikhoi who were murdered, in order to silence them, and whose stories, consequently, never were told.

In the face of such treatment it is hardly surprising that some Khoikhoi began to contemplate forms of resistance less passive than flight or the registering of a complaint before the authorities. There were frequent complaints by colonists about the reluctance of Khoikhoi to enter service, and periodic waves of fear would sweep the countryside when rumours of a Khoikhoi uprising went from district to district. In October 1788, for instance, there was an extraordinary disturbance amongst the Khoikhoi of the Overberg region. A Khoikhoi by the name of Jan Parel, who styled himself as "Onse Liewe Heer", began to preach a message of millenarian import. Parel instructed his followers to burn their European clothes, slaughter all of their white cattle and build new straw huts with two doors. They were then to take up their traditional weapons of bows, arrows and assegais and gather at the kraals of Oude Dally and Willem Stompe at Riviersonderend.⁷⁸

It is not exactly certain what events were supposed to result from compliance with these instructions but when local farmers saw hundreds of Khoikhoi assembling in the neighbourhood they anticipated an attack on the Swellendam *drostdy*. The movement was well supported by Khoikhoi women and also attracted slave adherents.⁷⁹ Simultaneous disturbances amongst the

76. His new employer, Andries Gousen, whose wife had assisted with tending his wounds, gave him three weeks off work to lodge his complaint. CA, I/STB 3/13, Relas van Hottentot Claas Cupido, 24 Nov. 1794.

77. See chapter 5 above.

78. Viljoen, "Khoisan Labour Relations In The Overberg Districts", pp.208-15.

79. Ibid., p.211-12.

Khoikhoi of Soetendals Valley, the Olifants River and the Hex River seemed to point to a Khoikhoi conspiracy.⁸⁰ There were rumours that Captain Kees was about to march from the Roggeveld with 200 Khoikhoi to lend his support to "Onse Liewe Heer". The *landdrost* of Swellendam called out the local farmers to defend the *drostdy* and to form commandos in order to apprehend suspicious Khoikhoi and to stifle the uprising at its birth.⁸¹ The result of this forewarned vigilance was that the expected attack never took place and Jan Parel was arrested. Significantly, however, he was not executed which would suggest that there was very little real evidence that he had attempted to incite a rebellion.⁸²

Millenarian movements invariably occur amongst societies undergoing rapid social, political and economic transformations - particularly whilst being colonised and, simultaneously, exposed to the precepts of Christianity for the first time. Such movements are both reactionary, in that they try to regain the lost purity of an imagined pre-colonial past, and forward-looking, in that they anticipate a future in which imperfections and suffering have been banished. They are thus highly syncretic and a testament to processes of both rapid acculturation and intolerable exploitation by the dominant colonial power. They are, above all, a form of protest most typically undertaken by pre-capitalist societies experiencing forcible integration into the modern world.⁸³ It is significant that such a movement should occur amongst the Khoikhoi of the Riviersonderend district for it was here that the first, abortive, Christian mission to the Khoikhoi took place and it was here, in the exploitative labour environment of the more settled agricultural districts of the southern Cape, that the influence of colonial culture was strong, stronger, perhaps, than in the frontier zone.⁸⁴ We should not underestimate, however, the ability of ideas to circulate from one district to

80. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Veldwachtmeesters Rapporten Over Boschjesmans Rooveryen, 1785-1793. Mathys Lourens, veldwachtmeester Soetendalsvalley to Landdrost, 14 Oct. 1788; Jacobus Mouton, Johannes Lubbe and Barend Vorster, Olifants River, 17 Oct. 1788; Du Toit, veldwachtmeester Hex River, 21 Oct. 1788.

81. Marthinus Theunissen, Company sergeant at the post of Zoetemelksvlei near Baviaanskloof, told the Moravian missionaries who came to the area in 1792 that he had prevented the local farmers from destroying the Khoikhoi some years earlier. He explained that: "Some time ago, a rumour had spread among the Hottentots that the end of the world was at hand, causing them to cease working for the farmers and to butcher their cattle. The enraged farmers had pretended that the Hottentots were about to rise against the Colonists. A commando of fifty farmers had gathered but he, Theunissen, had turned them back. Since that day, the farmers called him the god of the Hottentots". In Bernhard Kruger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms: The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa 1737-1869* (Genadendal, 1966), p.52.

82. Viljoen, pp.213-15.

83. See Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements Against the European Colonial Order*, (Cambridge, 1979) for an analysis of millenarian movements. Viljoen is incorrect to state that Jan Parel's movement was "a defiance of the process of acculturation" (Viljoen, p.211) since millenarian movements are themselves symptoms of the process of acculturation.

84. See chapter 12 below for a discussion of early missionary activity amongst the Khoikhoi.

another and the widespread disturbances amongst the Khoikhoi in 1788 are an indication that new forms of protest and religious awakening were stirring amongst the subjugated population.

Another serious alarm occurred in 1793 when the various *veldwagtmeesters* of the western Cape were fully expecting a three-pronged attack by the Khoikhoi and "oorlaamse Hottentots" of Swellendam, the Hex River and Namaqualand.⁸⁵ In 1798 there actually was a large scale uprising in Namaqualand, provoked by ill-treatment and the fear that the Khoikhoi were about to be enslaved.⁸⁶ At the same time the "kraal dwelling" Khoikhoi of the Roggeveld and Bokkeveld refused to submit their names to the local *veldwagtmeester*.⁸⁷ Then, in 1799, came the Khoikhoi rebellion of the eastern Cape which, though outside the scope of this study, certainly drew from the same wellsprings of bitterness as those drunk by the Khoikhoi of the northern frontier zone.⁸⁸

Fearful of the rebellious potential of the Khoikhoi, the frontier colonists sought even tighter controls. In 1787 Gerrit Maritz, the *veldwagtmeester* of the Roggeveld, requested that all Khoikhoi kraals, of which there were several between the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld, be expelled from the district. He suspected that many of the Khoikhoi dwelling in these kraals were responsible, along with the San, for stealing livestock from the colonists. Though they had no livestock of their own they had guns. There were also some "Bastaards" who were roaming the district with firearms and Maritz feared that if such undesirables were allowed to gather together there might be a recurrence of the Teutman affair.⁸⁹

It is interesting that Teutman's murder should be so fresh in Maritz's memory. It is also interesting that the *veldwagtmeester* should fear that Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and San were, potentially, close to the point that they might become allies. This is an indication that the perception existed, at least in the minds of members of the dominant class, that a community of interest was coming into being among the non-European oppressed of the frontier zone. This was not just a paranoid fantasy for there is indeed evidence that Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentots" and San were forging alliances of defence and aggression against the hated colonists.

85. See chapter 9, pp.349-355 below.

86. See chapter 10, pp.361-374 below.

87. See chapter 10, p.364 below.

88. For details of this rebellion see J.S. Marais, *Maynier and the First Boer Republic* (Cape Town, 1962); S. Newton-King and V.C. Malherbe, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion In The Eastern Cape (1799-1803)* (Cape Town, 1981); H. Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind* (Cape Town, 1975), pp.300-326.

89. CA, 1/STB 10/162, G. Maritz and thirty other inhabitants of Roggeveld to Landdrost, 3 March 1787. See also p.251 above.

In the first place, there were increasing complaints by *veldwagtmeesters* that Khoikhoi servants were deserting their masters, often with guns and horses, to join other groups of malcontents. Numbers of Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentot" and slave deserters - or *drosters* - had, for some time been joining themselves together in fugitive gangs, especially in the mountainous regions of the Cedarberg and Bokkeveld.⁹⁰ These *droster* gangs were evidence of a growing community of consciousness, forged at the level of lived experience, which united the unfree labourers of the frontier zone against their unbearable conditions of service. Not all of these *drosters* chose to flee to the dubious sanctuary of the wild mountains of the western Cape. Some fled beyond the outermost limits of the colony, to join the Oorlam groups of the Orange River,⁹¹ or to survive as best as they could in the arid expanses of Bushmanland. In November 1801, for instance, *Veld cornet* Barend Lubbe, of the Olifants River district, reported that the Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" of the area were refusing to enter service for less than fifty Rijksdaalders per annum and that they were gathering together in armed groups in order to trek beyond the Hantam where they would, no doubt, get up to no good.⁹²

In December 1801 Maritz's forebodings about a repeat of the Teutman murder seemed to come true as there was indeed a very similar incident in the Roggeveld. A large group, consisting of some seventy Khoikhoi and slaves, attacked the family of the wealthy Roggeveld farmer, Cornelius Koetse. Koetse, two of his sons, his knecht and a visiting butcher were murdered. The farmhouse was thoroughly plundered and Koetse's daughter-in-law was abducted by the murderers, who were, it seemed, Koetse's own "volk". After pursuing the group and engaging in an exchange of fire a commando recovered the woman alive, along with over 900 sheep, 100 cattle, 9 horses, 9 guns and 27 000 guilders. The commando killed two slaves and captured sixty-two other members of the group, most of whom were Khoikhoi but whose number also included some "Bastaards".⁹³ Here was clear proof that conditions of service tended to unify the subject groups of the frontier zone into common opposition to the white farmers of the region. There was also growing evidence that some Khoikhoi deserters were joining the San.

90. See Penn, "Droster Gangs".

91. See chapters nine and ten below.

92. CA, First British Occupation (henceforth BO) 58, Letters Received from Stellenbosch, 1801-1802, Lubbe to Van der Riet, 23 Nov. 1801, p.79. Lubbe expressed the usual request that kraals of independent Khoikhoi with firearms should not be permitted in his district. By February 1802 the Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" groups had indeed trekked to beyond the Hantam. See CA, 1/STB 10/153, Lubbe to Landdrost, 1 Feb. 1802.

93. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Snyman to Van der Riet, 17 Dec. 1801; Maritz to Landdrost, 22 Dec. 1801. Maritz described the group he arrested as consisting of "bastarts 8, Klyn en Groot slaaven 22, Klyn en Groot Hottentots 29, Klyn en Groot en de principaalste moordenaars 3 jongens in 7 hottentots mit geweers".

This was a move fraught with uncertainty for we can be sure that not all *drosters* would have appeared, to the San, as potential allies. Accustomed to viewing all who came from the colony as hostile, the San had to be wary about welcoming strangers. But, from the 1790s onwards, more and more Khoikhoi *drosters* began to link up with San resisters north and east of the Roggeveld. In December 1791 *Veldwagtmeester* Maritz reported the desertion of a group of Khoikhoi, from the colonists to the San, taking muskets with them.⁹⁴ In August 1795 Johannes Karstens reported from the Roggeveld that "Bastaard-Hottentots" were leaving almost daily to join the San and that no fewer than eleven had recently absconded with muskets.⁹⁵ Three years later Jacob Kruger reported from the same area that he had sent a commando after a "complot drossende Hottentots" in July, shooting one and capturing a woman and two children. In August he had been obliged to track down *drosters* who were stealing horses and riding away to the Koup. He had also taken the precaution of putting the "bosiman meyt" of Gert Victor in chains to see if this would "tame" her, the reason being that she had been responsible for the death of two Khoikhoi males who, on separate occasions, she had persuaded to desert with her and who had then been shot dead.⁹⁶ Further complications were caused when Khoikhoi men or women married captive San women or men for one spouse was bound to stay with the "owners" whereas the other sometimes sought to move to new employers.⁹⁷

Such incidents draw attention to the fact that the divisions between Khoikhoi and San were becoming more and more indistinct as the frontier struggle raged indiscriminately within and beyond colonial boundaries. With individual San amongst the colonial labour force and groups of Khoikhoi *drosters* amongst the San resisters the frontier farmers were inclined to regard all Khoisan as enemies who ought to be either killed or subjugated and bound into service. The commando was the instrument which had helped to bring this situation into being, both creating and controlling unfree labourers. Increasingly, commandos were summoned to track down *drosters*, or to confront rebellious Khoisan within the colony instead of simply attacking San resisters outside of it. In these circumstances it was hard to determine where the frontier zone ended or began. Thus, a European visitor to the village of Tulbagh (hardly within the frontier zone one would have thought) marvelled in 1806 that:

94. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz to Landdrost, 26 Dec. 1791.

95. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Karstens to Landdrost, 15 Aug. 1795.

96. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Kruger to Landdrost, 18 Aug. 1798.

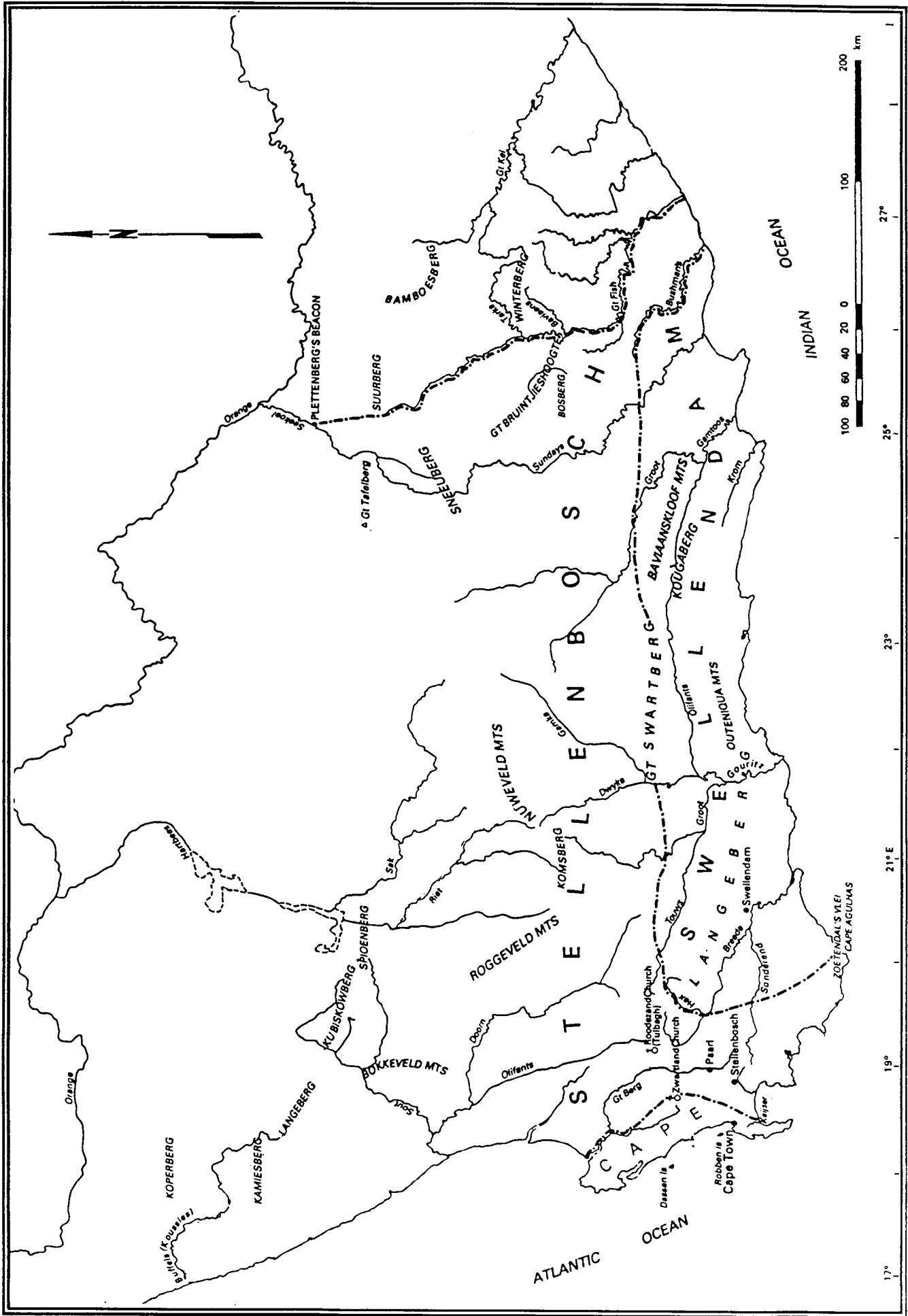
97. CA, 1/STB 10/152, J.S. Hugo to Landdrost, 13 Nov. 1798. Hugo's wife had a San servant who had been brought from the Seekoei River when he was a child. The boy had been raised by Hugo's wife's first husband and on reaching adulthood had commenced a relationship with a female servant of Jacobus Jooste. Jooste wanted his maid back but Hugo knew that once the maid left his San servant would desert to be with her.

When one considers that one is here, in this part of Africa, surrounded by the already mentioned wild and savage beasts; that there are also a multitude of poisonous creatures and plants; that one is served by slaves of a sly and ill-natured disposition, at times blood-thirsty and vindictive, who with a poisonous plant within reach at their feet can eliminate a whole family; when one thinks of the numerous slaves wandering around in great numbers, who having left their master, live in the wilderness and turn to robbery, theft and murder; finally, that a few hours from here the real wild people of Africa roam the country, who could never be brought to a settled communal way of life, namely the so-called Bushmen who murder all that is European; thinking of all this one cannot but be astonished that a person can live here so calmly and without fear. But so great is the power of the civilised and cultured ingenuity of man, that not only is he capable of defending himself against all these dangers, but that he can also prescribe the law for all living things and can keep them in check no matter how infinitely greater their strength might be than his.⁹⁸

The frontier, in other words, was ubiquitous and the effort to defend oneself against its dangers and prescribe the law for all living things within it was not, as the author of the above passage claimed, without a cost. Fear permeates the above description, just as it permeated Cape society, even though "the real wild people of Africa" were several hours away from Tulbagh, along the long line of the interior escarpment where the frontier of "civilised and cultured ingenuity" had ceased to advance.

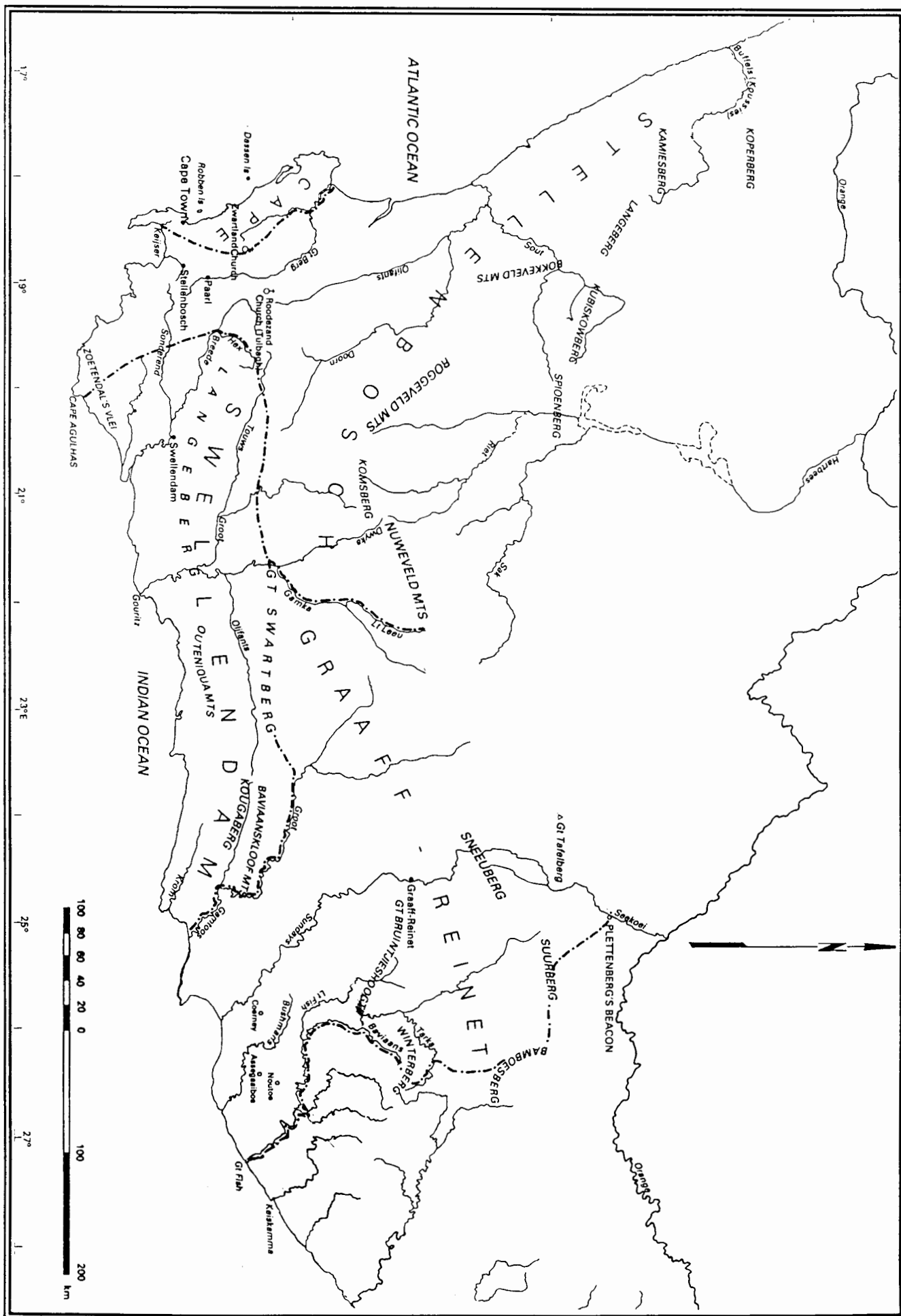
There was, however, one area of the colonial frontier zone that continued to move. At about the same time that colonial expansion ceased in the north-east it gained momentum further to the north-west. As numbers of "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" sought to evade commando duty they headed for the distant retreat of Namaqualand and the Orange River. The Khoisan of these marginal regions soon found themselves facing an invasion of people who themselves occupied a marginal position in colonial society. Though many of the "Bastaard" and "Bastaard-Hottentot" pioneers of the north-west were refugees or deserters from the colonial commandos they inadvertently brought the commando system with them. They were products of the frontier zone and bore the mark of its major institution. It is time now to turn our attention to these dry and distant lands of the north-western frontier.

98. H.G. Nahuys Van Burgst, *Adventures at the Cape of Good Hope in 1806* (Cape Town, 1993), p.52.



THE CAPE INTERIOR, c. 1770

THE CAPE INTERIOR, c. 1785



Part III

The North-Western Frontier Zone, 1700-1802

*'n Handvol gruis uit die Hantam -
My liewe, lekker Hantam-wyk
'n Handvol gruis en gedroogde blare
Waboom-blare, ghnarrabos-blare!
Arm was ek gister, en nou is ek ryk.*

C. Louis Leipoldt

*Het is voor my even so goed als of ik een blad van een boom trek en de
Heeren vraagen niet een na een Hottentot.*

Adriaan van Zijl

Societies of the Orange River, 1700-1780

NAMAQUALAND, THE NAMAQUA AND THE LOWER ORANGE RIVER 1700 - 1780

The area now known as Namaqualand was, in the eighteenth century, generally referred to as the home of the Little Namaqua (Klein Namaqua) or Little Namaqualand (Klein Namaqualand).¹ Great Namaqualand (Groot Namaqualand), the home of the Great Namaqua, was across the river. Today it is known as Namaland. The exact nature and extent of the relationship between these two pastoralist groups is difficult to assess though we may state that the Great Namaqua, as the name implies, were the senior branch.² Prior to the eighteenth century both the Great and Little Namaqua were accustomed to ranging far beyond their home territories. Both groups, for instance, at times visited the settlement at Table Bay. Further evidence of the vast extent of their movements is that they were noted south of the Olifants River in 1661 and in Griqualand West in 1795.³

In 1661 Pieter van Meerhof encountered a group of some 700 Little Namaqua in the vicinity of present day Van Rhynsdorp. They had about 4 000 cattle and 300 sheep with them and their settlement comprised of seventy-three huts.⁴ Such numbers were to wither away rapidly, however, as the colony expanded. In July 1779, when Gordon visited the kraal of the Little Namaqua captain, Wildschut, in the Kamiesberg, he was informed by the resident Little Namaqua that they and the Great Namaqua were the same people who numbered, in total, about 400 men, women and children. According to Gordon's informants there were, apart from

1. See Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.722-738 for origin of term "Namaqua". I believe Nienaber is incorrect to think that there was a third group, south of the Little Namaqua, called the Amatuas. I have preferred to use the slightly archaic "Namaqua" rather than "Nama" because I am principally concerned with the inhabitants of Little Namaqualand and not with those of what is now known as "Namaland" in Namibia.

2. When Gordon asked the Little Namaqua about their origins he was given the following account: "To the question whether the ancestors of the Little Namaqua had always been in this country or where they came from, the answer was: there was an old but sprightly woman from Great Namaqualand who had strayed from her country looking for food. She was named *kouws* who then lived alone and sought her food in the veld. Then, long afterwards an old but sprightly man strayed from his country in the same manner and found that woman and then married her. The man's name was *Koebeseeb* and all the Little Namaquas are descended from them and all Little Namaquas were called after them, one half *Koebbebequa* and the other *kaus kw(a)* after the woman." A.B. Smith and R. Pfeiffer, "Gordon's Notes On The Khoikhoi", p.18.

3. See Extracts from Journal of P. Meerhof, March-April 1661, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 1, pp.228-234; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.305.

4. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 1, p.233.

Wildschut, four other captains.⁵ Three of these, presumably, were the heads of the various subsections of the Great Namaqua: the !Gami=nun, Gaminus or Bondelswarts near Warmbad; the Gei-// Khaun, Geikhaun or Red Nation of Hoachanas; and the //Haboben, Haboben or Veldskoendraers north of the Karas Mountains.⁶ In the 1770s the Great Namaqua were reported to be rich in cattle though prone to fighting among themselves in order to acquire more cattle. On the whole, however, relationships between the Great and Little Namaqua were cordial with friends and relatives linking the two groups across the river.⁷ Amongst the women of the Little Namaqua Gordon noted that there were two from the Great Namaqua who were married to Kamiesberg men. Further evidence of the contact between the two groups was that some elderly Namaqua, who had smallpox, claimed that they had caught the affliction in Great Namaqualand.⁸ Wikar mentions the Little Namaqua as engaging in trade with the Great Namaqua, exchanging cattle for beads and tobacco which came from the north, via the Ovambo and Tswana.⁹

Relationships with the San and other Khoikhoi groups were not, however, so straightforward. The Little Namaqua had been accustomed, before competition from colonists prevented them from doing so, to graze their livestock in the Olifants River valley and the Sandveld of the West coast to the north of the Piketberg.¹⁰ Here, in pre-colonial times, they encountered both San and Grigriqua. The Grigriqua, came under the patronage and protection of the Namaqua, but, by the early eighteenth century, were experiencing rapid social disintegration. Those who survived the raids and robberies of the colonists, the 1713 epidemic of smallpox and the subsequent drought and stock disease, were either forced to work as servants for the Europeans or to trek away to the north.¹¹ In time these survivors formed the nucleus of the Griqua and played an important role in the vicinity of the Orange River. There were doubtless some, however, who attached themselves as servants (!gan) or herdsmen (!gaisan) to their erstwhile protectors the Namaqua.¹²

5. Gordon, 29 July 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.253.

6. These are the names used in Wikar's journal. See E.E. Mossop, (ed.) *The Journals of Wikar (1779), Coetse (1760) and W. van Reenen, (1791)*, (Cape Town, 1935) p.13. See especially the chapter in this book by J.A. Engelbrecht, "The Tribes of Wikar's Journal", pp.221-237. Wikar, a Swedish born deserter from the VOC, left an account of his travels along the Orange River between September 1778 and September 1779.

7. Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.23 and 29.

8. Gordon, 27 July 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.252.

9. Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.75-81.

10. I. Schapera, *The Khoisan peoples of South Africa*, p.45; R. Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa*, pp.121 and 226. See also chapter 2 above.

11. See chapter 2 above.

12. Schapera, p.234.

The Sandveld San also seem to have acted as clients of the Little Namaqua.¹³ Not all of the San in close proximity to the Namaqua, however, regarded themselves as being clients of the Khoikhoi. The San of Bushmanland, to the east of Little Namaqualand, were, according to Gordon, in enmity with the Little Namaqua. Gordon encountered several "Bushmen" (his description) in his journey between the Kamiesberg and Sandfontein (near the Orange River at present day Pella) in September 1779. One of these kraals had stolen twenty head of stock, including a milk cow, from the Little Namaqua. Gordon stated that "These Bushmen were very friendly, but were great enemies of the Namaquas, stole stock from them and said it was because they had come into their country to graze stock".¹⁴ It was not only the Little Namaqua who were at war with the San of Bushmanland for Gordon was told, by one of the latter, of a bloody battle which had taken place the year before with the !Gami=nun or Bondelswarts of the Great Namaqua. The San had journeyed three days north of the river, stealing cattle and killing a young Khoikhoi man. This, it was claimed, was in revenge for the death of a San in an earlier fight. The Bondelswarts had retaliated and, using their shields to advantage, forced the San into the river where fifteen died from arrow wounds or drowning.¹⁵

Whether this enmity between the Namaqua and the Bushmanland San was endemic, sporadic or fairly recent is not clear. The Little Namaqua were quite accustomed to moving their livestock from the winter rainfall area of the Kamiesberg into the summer rainfall area of Bushmanland when the grazing and water were attractive enough to warrant it.¹⁶ It is unlikely that this was a recent practice but it is possible that such incursions were gaining in proportion as colonial pastoralists began to appropriate Khoi pasturage and water in the Kamiesberg. That the Bushmanland San were able to come to terms with other pastoralists is clear from their dealings with the Einiqua and, initially, some of the colonists. In this respect Gordon noted that: "These Bushmen serve our farmers and are good herdsman but they do not tolerate bad treatment." The Namaqua, who had found it possible to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Sandveld San of the West

13. See chapters 2 and 3 below.

14. Gordon, 26 and 27 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.296-299. Gordon asked a Little Namaqua informant called Kaasap who it was who had taught them the difference between good and evil. Kaasap replied "that their ancestors had taught them to do good towards those who did good to them, and not to harm anyone who had not harmed them. But for them the Bushmen were wild beasts, and therefore he could not do any good towards him, because he harassed them too much". A.B. Smith and R. Pfeiffer, "Gordon's Notes On The Khoikhoi", p.22.

15. Gordon, 1 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.303. Wikar corroborates this story in his journal, see Mossop, *Wikar*, p.65.

16. See J.A. Heese, "Onderwys in Namakwaland, 1750-1940 (D.Ed., Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1942) pp.9-15.

coast, were perhaps not able to induce the "proud and haughty" Bushmanlanders to accept similar terms.¹⁷

We do not know a great deal about the territory between Goodhouse and the Orange River mouth at this time, but it does not seem to have been the home of a particular Khoi social group. Though there are pastoralists in the Richtersveld today who can support flocks on the region's poor grazing, it is unlikely that the arid lands north and south of the lower Orange were a frequent haunt of the Namaqua. The San were probably the area's chief inhabitants. When Gordon visited the river's mouth in 1779 he found a settlement of people who lacked livestock, lived off marine resources, and who numbered a mere seventy men, women and children.¹⁸

To the north-west, according to Wikar, the Great Namaqua, especially the Gei// Khaun under their captain Kendelaar were said to be "constantly waging war with the Zambdama (Bergdamara living near the sea) and the Hottentots who dwell along the Fish River and towards the coast".¹⁹

In the east, the most powerful neighbours with whom the Little Namaqua had to contend, were the Einiqua. They were also Khoikhoi, and their language was almost the same as the Namaqua's.²⁰ Though there was contact between the two groups they were not really contiguous to each other. The Little Namaqua did not often go further east up the river than Pella. This was San territory and the Bushmanland San, though on good terms with the Einiqua, did not welcome the Namaqua to the river. Away from the river Bushmanland was, except after the rains, environmentally unattractive to pastoralists. The Einiqua settlements only really began near the Augrabies Falls and there was thus about a hundred kilometre stretch of river between the Namaqua and them. This may help to explain why neither Wikar or Gordon mention any conflict between the two groups. Bushmanland acted as a *cordon sanitaire* between them. Coetzee, however, declared that "these Enequas live in continuous enmity with the Amacguas", though it is clear that he meant the Great Namaqua rather than the Little Namaqua.²¹

17. Gordon, 27 Sept., and 1 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.299 and 303-304.

18. Gordon, 20 Aug. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.269-273.

19. Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.29.

20. Gordon, 28 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.299.

21. Jacobus Coetzee, "A narrative supplied by order of the Right Honourable Ryk Tubagh ... concerning the Journey made by him in and through the Land of the Great Amaquas", in Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.287. Jacobus Coetzee journeyed to Great Namaqualand in 1760.

Brink reported how, in 1761, Coetzee found that the Namaqua were unwilling to guide him to the Einiqua "except on the condition that they attacked the Einiquas as enemies".²² These too were probably Great Namaqua, and it is likely that more frequent contact between the groups north of the river had resulted in greater enmity between them.

Though Bushmanland acted as a buffer, Namaqualand was the southern gateway to the Orange River and it was through this region that the first colonists had to come. Namaqualand has been aptly described as a semi-desert surrounded by a desert.²³ This relative abundance made it seem an oasis in the midst of aridity for there were waterless wastes around it to the north, south, east and west. Amidst the round granite mountains of the Kamiesberg were perennial springs of fresh water, whilst its comparatively high elevation (1 200-1 800 m) made it cooler than its surroundings, attracted greater precipitation and gave it good grazing. All these advantages had made it a focal point for pastoralists who were able to practice a type of transhumance by exploiting the variations of Namaqualand's three geographical zones: the Sandveld or desert coastal belt; the mountain belt; and Bushmanland or the inland plateau to the east. Of these three zones the Namaqua preferred the mountains which, in addition to being cooler, were the best watered parts, receiving 200-350 mm of rain a year. Rain fell mainly in the winter, during which time it was frequently possible to graze in the Sandveld to the west and escape the colder weather (and occasional snow) of the Kamiesberg. In the summer, if the rains fell in Bushmanland, there would be good grazing and enough surface water to graze livestock to the east of the mountains.²⁴

From the earliest days of Dutch settlement at the Cape the colonists had known of the existence of the Namaqua, having been informed about them by the Khoikoi closer to the Cape. Indeed, the object of the first Company journeys of exploration into the interior was to establish contact with the people, for it was thought that they might be valuable trading partners in addition to holding the key to the fabled river of Vigiti Magna and the empire of Monomotapa. Between 1659 and 1664 five major expeditions were sent northwards for this purpose and those of Cruijthoff and Meerhoff, although they did not penetrate the Kamiesberg, did at least make contact with the Namaqua. It was only in 1685, however, that Commander Simon van der Stel led the first Europeans to the heart of the Namaqualand, enticed there by reports of copper. Though copper

22. E.E. Mossop (ed.) *The Journals of Brink (1761-2) and Rhenius (1724)* (Cape Town, 1947), p.59.

23. Heese, "Namakwaland", p.5.

24. Heese, "Namakwaland", pp.9-15; L. E. Webley, "Settlement Studies Among Descendents of Nama Herders: An Ethno-Archaeological Approach", *Khoisis*, 3, 1982; H. Krohne and L. Steyn, *Grondgebruik in Namakwaland* (Cape Town, 1990), pp.11-26.

was found it was not feasible to exploit it but the Company now had a better idea of Namaqualand. They learnt that the Namaqua, though cattle rich, were not populous - Van der Stel mentions that there were only eight or nine kraals.²⁵ Though Van der Stel asserted company sovereignty over the Namaqua this was rather a hollow gesture which did nothing but cause ill will amongst them.²⁶ The Namaqua were left alone until the beginning of the eighteenth century when the simultaneous opening of the cattle trade to freeburghers and the settlement of colonists in the Land of Waveren began a new phase of expansion in the Colony's history.²⁷

By the end of 1740 the Dutch were in complete control of the lands to the south of Namaqualand where all kraal captains had to accept a VOC staff office - a symbol of Dutch overlordship. It could be that Coetzee was not entirely wrong when he said of some Namaqua, whom he encountered in 1760 four days north of the Orange River near Warmbad in Namibia, that they "used to live on this side of the Great River, but [who] about 20 years ago betook themselves across the River, deeper inland".²⁸ This date coincides with the heavy fighting of 1738-39 and it is a distinct possibility that large groups of Namaqua had indeed trekked northwards at this stage. In these circumstances it was only a matter of time before emboldened colonists began to encroach even further on the Namaqua and press onwards to exploit the resources of the Orange River.

The first Europeans to settle in Namaqualand, instead of simply visiting it as ivory hunters or livestock traders and raiders, did so in about 1750. In February and March of that year Jan Overholster, Jan Meyer and Jan Venter registered loan-farms which they had claimed at "de Leliefontein" and "Groene Rivier", the former place being described as "over the Oliphants en Doorn Rivier". Only a year later Rudolph Brits registered the loan-farm "Schoenmakersfont" at "de Leeuwen Valley" which, according to Heese, is the present day farm "Henkies" near Goodhouse at the Orange River. We can be sure that these farms were registered some time after the actual occupation of them and that they represented only a fraction of the presence of European *trekboers* in the vicinity.²⁹

25. P.L. Scholtz, "Die Historiese Ontwikkeling Van Die Onder-Olifantsrivier 1660-1902", *Archives Year Book for S.A. History*, 1966 Pt. 2., pp.7-21; G. Waterhouse, *Simon van der Stel's Journal of his Expedition to Namaqualand, 1685-6*, (London, 1932).

26. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, p.137.

27. See chapter 2 above.

28. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.281.

29. CA, RLR 12, 3 Feb. 1750, p.115; 6 Feb. 1750, p.116; 21 March 1750, p.124; 6 March 1751, p.193. Heese, in "Namakwaland", p.40, says that it was Johannes Zwanepoel who acquired 'De Schoenmakersfontein' but the RLR records state it was Rudolph Brits. It is interesting to speculate that the "fontein" might have been named after the

Ten years passed before there is evidence of a new spate of loan-farm registration in Namaqualand. In February 1761 Jan van Aarden registered "de Esels Jagt" and "de Leelie fontein" both places described as "over de Oliphants Rivier aan de groene Rivier boven op die berg". In March Gerrit Cloete Jacobsz and Gerrit Cloete Gerritsz registered "de Welkom" and "Avontuur", both farms "booven de groene Rivier op de Kemisberg" (Kamiesberg). In April, Hendrik Beukes registered "de tweefontein" and "de vuytkomst", the first "boven" and the second "onder de Kamiesberg". By 1771 several more farms had been registered. "Silverfontein aan de Kamiesbogen over de Groene Rivier" was taken by Nicolaas Smit; "Modderfontein" in the Kamiesberg by Hendrik Beukes; "Renosterfontein" at the mouth of the "Couse" or Buffalo River by Petrus Johannes Van den Heever; "Tweefontein" beyond the Groene River by Justus Engelbrecht; "Uitkomst", between the Groene and Spoeg Rivers, by Hermanus Engelbrecht; "Avontuur", on the Spoeg River by Jasper Cloete and "Vredelust" in "Pedros Cloof" in the Kamiesberg by Pieter van den Heever the younger.³⁰

The interesting thing about "Esels Jagt" and "Leliefontein" is that, by October 1771, they had been granted to Hermanus Engelbrecht (though "Esels Jagt" had now become "Eselsfontein"). Governor Plettenberg, however, was informed that "Eselsfontein" had already been granted to Dirk Coetzee (there is no mention of this in the RLR records) whilst "Leliefontein" was where the kraal of "the Hottentot Captain Wildschut" lay. Engelbrecht was therefore instructed to vacate these two Kamiesberg farms (he already had a farm at Uijtkoms), leaving Coetzee and Wildschut in possession.³¹ This is one of the very few examples of the colonial authorities recognising the rights of the Khoikhoi to remain on land which had always been theirs. It suggests that the Company valued the goodwill of the Namaqua, though it is unlikely that this attitude stemmed from a perception of the vulnerability of the colonial position in the far north-west. It is possible that it was the growing number of *trekboers* in the area that was responsible for a displacement of some of the Namaqua population hinted at by Jacobus Coetzee who, in search of ivory,

German Volkert Schumacher who was farming at the Orange River, near to the junction of the Leeuwe River, when Gordon visited the area in December 1779. See Gordon, 7 Dec 1779 and 15 Dec 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.364 and p.371; Mossop, *Wikar*, p.115. For Schumacher see J. Hoge, "Personalalia of the Germans at the Cape, 1652-1806", in *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1946, p.381.

30. CA, RLR 16, 17 Feb. 1761, pp.129-130; 1 April 1761, pp.143-144; RLR 19, 24 March 1766, p.112; RLR 20, 20 April 1768, p.35; 22 Oct. 1768, p.87; 16 Feb. 1769, p.119; 27 Feb. 1769, p.121; RLR 21, 22 Feb. 1771, p.160; 5 Oct. 1771, pp. 228-229; 7 Oct. 1771, p.230.

31. D. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. III, Letter from Plettenberg to Landdrost of Stellenbosch, 31 Jan. 1772, pp.10-11 and p.72 n.1. Captain Wildschut was the chief of the Little Namaqua and his real name was "Noebie" (Gordon, 25 July, 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.250). Heese, "Namakwaland", p.27 refers to him as "Haimaap" and says that the colonists called him Jantjie Wildschut. See also CA, RLR Vol. 21, 5 Oct. 1771, pp.228-229, for details of the allocation of "Leliefontein".

travelled across the Orange as far as the Busenberg in 1760. He remarked that on his return journey he had not met "the Little Amaquas who had five years ago trekked from the Groene River to across the Cous River".³²

By 1761, when the expedition of Captain Hendrik Hop passed through Little Namaqualand to explore the north of the river, its official journalist, Carel Brink, recorded that: "the aforesaid Little Namaquas who inhabit this land are of a nature most lazy and timorous. Owning few cattle, they live in great poverty, but not withstanding this, are continually harassed by the Bosjesmans who rob them of their stock. In this way, this people becomes weaker and poorer from time to time. It is to be feared that in course (sic) of a few years they will at last be extirpated by the said robbers".³³

"BASTAARDS", OORLAMS AND "BASTAARD-HOTTENTOTS"

When Gordon was in Namaqualand in 1779 he observed that: "From Groene River there are nineteen stock farms in Namaqualand. Of these there are five married farmers; the rest mostly take a Hottentot woman or two which, so I hear, they marry according to their custom".³⁴ What Gordon was noticing, was not only the fact that miscegenation was taking place in the north-western frontier zone of the Cape, but that it was the rule rather than the exception. We have already seen how Willem van Wyk, in 1738, had also taken to wife "Hottentot fashion" a near relative of Captain Gal of the Great Namaqua.³⁵ That the Namaqua women were attractive to European men is also confirmed by Gordon, who confessed to his journal on 17 September 1779 (watching a dance) - "This was one of the prettiest Hottentot women that I have ever seen. She was almost white and although she had a Hottentot face, she had fine features."³⁶

The great distance and comparative isolation of Namaqualand and the Orange River from Cape Town, seems to have encouraged behaviour which would not normally have been socially acceptable in Cape society. This is not to say that miscegenation did not take place in Cape Town - it did - but that the majority of the white male community in Namaqualand should be married outside of the church, to Khoikhoi women, went against the grain.³⁷

32. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.289.

33. Mossop, *Brink*, p.29.

34. Gordon, 23 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.274. He describes this custom in some detail.

35. See chapter 3, p.98 above.

36. Gordon, 17 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.287.

37. See Elphick and Shell, "Intergroup relations" for details of sexual mores in the Cape. See also discussion in chapter four above. Heese, "Namakwaland", pp.80-85 has more information on the situation in Namaqualand.

The extensive intermarriage between Namaqua and European colonists must have had a profound influence on the social, political and economic structures of both communities. Two distinct pastoralist communities were being bound together by ties of kinship. We simply do not know the extent to which *trekboers* regarded their Khoi-in-laws as family - or vice versa. We would be wrong to think that such marriages implied any sort of recognition by the Dutch or that the Khoikhoi were now regarded as social equals who were bound to them by ties of blood and reciprocal social obligations. But, on the other hand, it would have been surprising if some sense of shared community was entirely lacking.³⁸ Certainly, the offspring of such unions could not be ignored though the precise status of these children was hard to define and underwent constant redefinition - usually for the worse - throughout the century. The fact that so many of these "Bastaard" (as they were called) children bore the surnames of their fathers is testimony to the fact that their parentage was acknowledged. How many of these children entered "white society" and how many formed the nucleus of a separate "Bastaard" society, cannot be determined. It would, however, seem that few entered Khoikoi society, for the aspiration of these products of cross-culturation was towards the dominant culture and away from the subordinate one. In time too the Namaqua were to fall victim to "Bastaard" as well as to Dutch colonists, so that ultimately miscegenation brought their society very few benefits.

Though the status of "Bastaards" was initially superior to that of Khoikhoi or San the tendency was for it to decline - economically, politically and socially - throughout Cape society during the eighteenth century. This process was first experienced in areas of high white population density close to Cape Town, where mixed marriages became less and less socially acceptable and where it became more and more difficult for "Bastaards" to acquire loan-farms.³⁹ For a time distant Namaqualand and its sparsely populated surroundings were congenial to "Bastaards" who were able to acquire farms there. Thus farms had been taken out by "gedoopte bastaards" Kok, Diederiks, Owies, Brand and Meyer by 1793 whilst "Bastaard" sons of white fathers were able to occupy their father's farms quite unobtrusively in their father's name. Typical "Bastaard" surnames were also those of typical Namaqualand *trekboers*: Engelbrecht, Beukes, Cloete,

38. Gordon (23 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.294) explains how a Namaqua would usually give his parents-in-law a gift of beads and ten heifers upon marrying their daughter. Nine of these heifers would be on loan and be paid back to the young man after three or four years. We do not know whether this practice - which bound the two families together with material ties - was observed by white men and their Namaqua in-laws. Wikar's account is similar to Gordon's but he states that the suitor gave his mother-in-law two milk cows and his father "cattle", "but for these he gets just about as many in return". The married couple also got "household goods comprising 6 or 10 poles for the hut, 2 or 3 mats and a painted skin bag made of springbuck hide and containing buchu". Mossop, *Wikar*, p.89-90.

39. See chapter 4, pp.158-163 above.

Mostert, Bok, Brand, Meyer, Morton, Rossouw, Van Rooyen and Bezuidenhout for instance. A less exalted class of whites in Namaqualand - consisting of deserters and *knechts* - also lent their names to their "Bastaard" progeny: Bensch, Clause, Diergaardt, Diederiks, Eyman, Korter, Model, Owies, Otto and Zaal.⁴⁰

As the century progressed however, the frontier began to close on the "Bastaards" - even in Namaqualand. The escalating fighting against Khoisan resisters along the northern frontier meant that "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" were increasingly being expected to render service on commandos. This was particularly irksome since it occurred at a time when land was becoming harder to acquire within the colonial frontier and the social status of "Bastaards" was deteriorating. In addition the status of "Bastaard-Hottentots" was plunging rapidly as these individuals found themselves being treated like slaves, having to work for a period of 20-25 years without any pay for their "master" and having their names registered or "ingeboek". For this reason from the mid 1770's onwards streams of "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" began to trek out of the colony, beyond the Cape frontier, at first to Namaqualand but later into Bushmanland and the Orange River.⁴¹

A clear indication of this process is found in a letter from *Veldwagtmeester* Adriaan van Zyl, of the Bokkeveld over the Doorn River district, in 1778. He wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch to complain that "all the Hottentots and Bastaards fit for commandos are going away to the Namaqua country to evade serving on Commandos" and his request was that the *veldwagtmeester* of Namaqualand be advised to "order out all the Hottentots and Bastaards every year in the month of March, for our relief who must always be upon commando. This would be better than trafficking with the Namaquas...". Enclosed in the letter was a touching note from one of the servants of Nicolaas Laubscher, one Samuel Roussouw, a "Baptised Bastard" who pleaded that his master could not spare him from commando duty and that "all the pleasure that I have had in this country, has ceased for the last three years, and I have now nothing but sorrow: if you are disposed to drive me into further trouble, you may do so. I do not know what I have done to you." Needless to say, Van Zyl was not impressed by such requests and the northwards trek of dissatisfied servants continued.⁴² In February 1779, for instance, Willem Steenkamp, the *veldkorporaal* of Onder Roggeveld, complained to the authorities that it was impossible to mount

40. Heese, "Namakwaand", pp.80-85; Henry Lichtenstein, *Travels* Vol. II, pp.303-304; J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people 1652-1937* (London, 1939) pp.9-13.

41. See chapters 5 and 6 above.

42. Report of Field Sergeant Adriaan van Zyl, 2 Nov. 1778, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.77.

commandos because "the Hottentots who were in my district have gone away to the Namaqua country, and those who have not gone yet, are quitting the Dutch and going thither also".⁴³ It is significant that *Veldwagtmeester* Van Zyl should have mentioned the "trafficking and bartering with the Namaquas", for there was doubtless a brisk trade in ivory, cattle, sheep, firearms, ammunition and other colonial goods taking place.⁴⁴

Namaqualand and the Orange River were thus not just the crucible where different races were mixed; they were also the haven of opportunity, a destination for people of mixed race or lowly social status from other parts of the colony. This was a mixed blessing. For every runaway slave or deserted soldier who wanted nothing more than a chance to lead an independent existence there was another who saw the freedom of the frontier as a licence to violence against his fellows. For each "Bastaard", "Bastaard-Hottentot" or Oorlam who sought the opportunity to become a successful pastoralist, free from the increasing racial discrimination of the southern Cape, there were others who perceived their best career opportunities to lie in hunting, robbing and raiding. By the 1770's such people were beginning to make an impact on the Khoisan societies of Namaqualand and the Orange River.

One of the first indications we have that the activities of "Bastaards" or Oorlams were adversely affecting the Little Namaqua dates from 1 June 1777. On that date Governor O.M. Berg wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch to report that he had received as complainants two captains of the Little Namaqua known as Wildschut and Grootvogel. These two men had been attacked and robbed of some of their cattle by the "Bosjeman Hottentots" whom, they claimed, had been invited to do so by "the Bastard Adam Boer". Adam Boer was a *knecht* at "one of the farms of the *burgher* Pieter van den Heever, situated between the Great River and the Copper Mountains. "The stolen cattle were bartered from the San by two European sergeants of the VOC, namely Matthys and Schoenmaker Volkers (sic). Berg instructed the *landdrost* to restore the cattle to Wildschut and Grootvogel and to question Adam Boer and the Volkers. We do not know the outcome of this investigation but the incident is revealing about the fluid nature of social relationships in Namaqualand at this time. That a "Bastaard" working for a European should be in cahoots with the San against the Namaqua is interesting, though not necessarily typical. The

43. Report of Field Sergeant W. Steinkamp, 15 Feb. 1779, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.77 and n.1.

44. As late as August 1779 it was still possible to hunt elephant in Little Namaqualand. Gordon reported the spoor of many elephant near the mouth of the Kouwsies River, as well as several dead elephant. He remarked that "there has been a Bastard Hottentot here for some time who has shot elephant at this spot". At the site of Pieter van der Heever's deserted farm, "Renosterfontein", near the river mouth, Gordon's party saw twenty elephant. Gordon, 6 Aug. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.257.

two Little Namaqua chiefs were themselves accompanied to the governor by another "Bastaard" (presumably an ally) and another Namaqua who could speak Dutch. Significantly, this was not the first time (nor the last) that the Cape authorities had taken steps to protect the interests of Captain Wildschut of the Namaqua.⁴⁵

One of the most influential of the Oorlam groups by the end of the eighteenth century was that of the Griqua - initially known simply as "Bastaards" and descended from remnants of the original Grigriqua Khoikhoi of the Western Cape coastal belt. The founding father of the Griqua was Adam Kok I who, traditionally, was believed to have been a manumitted slave who bought his freedom from his master, N. Laubscher, and established himself as a farmer at the farm "Stinkfontein" in the Piketberg district.⁴⁶ There is evidence in the *Oude Wildschutteboeken*, where he is described as a "Hottentot", that he left his farm in 1771.⁴⁷ It is however, plausible to suggest that Kok was not simply a Grigriqua Khoikhoi and that he was descended from a runaway slave. In 1713 a slave by the name of Claas Kok was reported to have been among a group of slaves who managed to reach the Grigriqua without being recaptured.⁴⁸ The Grigriqua, at this date, had a reputation for harbouring and assimilating escaped slaves and it is possible that Claas Kok took a Khoikhoi wife and became accepted as a Grigriqua. The mention of the "Hottentot Claas Kok" comes in 1735 when he and several other Khoisan servants of colonists from the Piketberg and Sandveld district were deeply implicated in the fateful expedition to the Orange River in that year. Indeed, Claas Kok is specifically mentioned as having killed Arys, the brother of Captain Gal of the Great Namaqua, and of having taken part in the attacks on the Little Namaqua. That a "Hottentot" called Adam Kok should subsequently own a farm near the Piketberg and have great influence amongst the Grigriqua would suggest, most strongly, that he was Claas Kok's son.⁴⁹

When Adam Kok I left "Stinkfontein" in 1771 he went to the Orange River with the intention of setting up as a hunter with his sons Cornelius and Solomon. He did not take out a loan-farm himself, but Cornelius rented the farm "Elandsfontein" behind the Coperberg in Namaqualand in 1776. At a later date Cornelius was to own at least five farms and became a pillar of

45. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. III, p.72. Schoenmaker Volkers is obviously the same person as Volkers Schoenmaker (see note 29 above).

46. See Legassick, "Northern Frontier", p.414 n.109; R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: A Study in the development of Stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge, 1976), p.14; Heese, "Namakwaland" pp.76-77.

47. CA, RLR 21, 23 April 1771, p.196. Hugo Lambregts register "Stinkfontein over de Berg Rivier aan de hoek van de Bosjesmans Kloof. Voorige persoon Adam Kok".

48. Ross, *Cape of Torments*, p.89.

49. CA, LM 49, Res., 13 March 1739, p.263.

Namaqualand society. Solomon was to acquire a farm near the Coperberg but in the 1770's the major activity of the Koks was hunting ivory along and beyond the river. The Koks were, however, rich in livestock and had many followers. By the time Adam Kok I died in 1795, the Koks were a powerful and widespread force as far east as present day Griqualand West.⁵⁰

Another "Bastaard" family which, like the Koks, was to achieve a degree of wealth and status along the Orange River was that of the Barends or Berends. The founders of this particular family were Claas and his brother Piet Barend. Claas was sometimes (somewhat confusingly) referred to by Wikar as "Claas Bastaard" or "the Hottentot, Claas Barend, a Goeyeman Hottentot from the neighbourhood of the Cape". This uncertainty about Barends name is probably a sign that, like Kok, he was of mixed Khoikhoi and slave origin. Claas Barend accompanied Coetzee on his journey to Great Namaqualand in 1760 and, subsequently joined Wikar and Gordon on their trails along the Orange.⁵¹ By 1778 Claas had a farm at the junction of the Dabenoris and Orange River (just east of Goodhouse) from which he traded with the Great Namaqua or went on hunting expeditions,⁵² whilst in 1784 a Klaas Bastard was described as the "regent" on Sebastiaan van Reenen's farm in the Hantam.⁵³

Another equally influential, though far less welcome (as far as the authorities were concerned), Oorlam group in the region were the Afrikaners under their leader Klaas Afrikaner. Klaas was, in all probability, the brother of a man named Afrikaner and the son of one Oude Ram. These men, the founders of the soon to be notorious Afrikaner Oorlam group, first attracted official attention in 1761. They were, according to Vedder, a people of mixed slave and Griqua origins. This would give them the same antecedents as the Koks and, indeed, it was their relationship with the Koks that first caused their name to be recorded. In 1761 Adrian van Schoor, an official of the

50. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Verklarings, Pleidooie en Interrogatorien (Krimineel), 1786-1793, Relas van Cornelis Kok, 14 Nov 1790; RLR 24, 18 May 1776, p.144; RLR 36, 21 April 1790, p.218; Heese, "Namakwaland" p.76; J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa undertaken at the request of the London Missionary Society, Second Journey* (London, 1822; reprint Cape Town, 1974) pp. 267, 359.

51. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.23. "The head of the party was the Hottentot, Claas Barend, a Goeyeman Hottentot from the neighbourhood of the Cape, who had previously been on an expedition with Jac Koetzee to the Great Namacquaas and was now living here". Coetzee does not mention Claas Barend. Claas and a certain Piet Baster went with Wikar to the extent of his journey upstream. (Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.170-173). Gordon (28 Sept 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.300) described Claas and Piet Bastart "as living on Pienaar's farm (i.e. 'Sandfontein') and later referred to "A hottentot and good shot called Klaas Barend" (8 Oct 1779, p.310). See also Legassick, "Northern Frontier", p.410 n.48; pp.112-115; I.D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa. Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (Johannesburg, 1937) p.80; F. Le Vaillant, *New Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the Years 1783, 1784, 1785* (London, 1796) pp.150-151.

52. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.25.

53. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Letters from Veldwagmeesters 1773-1795, J. Van Zijl to Landdrost, 6 Aug. 1784.

VOC, complained to the governor about the behaviour of the "Bosjemans Hottentotten Captain Claas en Afrikaner". These individuals, Van Schoor stated, had assaulted Adam Kok and attempted to murder him. Since this occurred before Kok had trekked to the Orange River, there is a likelihood that the events were close to Kok's farm "Stinkfontein" in the Piketberg. No reason was given for this attack though Van Schoor described Afrikaner as an "arrogant man" with an "evil disposition" who, if left to his own devices would, along with his father Oude Ram, invite the more rapacious Khoisan of the district to rebel against the Cape authorities. In order to prevent this and to protect Kok, Van Schoor recommended that Afrikaner and Oude Ram be banished to Robben Island. In the case of Afrikaner this sentence was carried out in September 1761 though Oude Ram was not committed - perhaps exempted by his age or his death. Nor was Klaas imprisoned since it was found that he had not been involved in the crime. Afrikaner died, on the island, on 15 June 1777.⁵⁴

It can thus be seen that the chosen paths of the Koks and Afrikaners diverged at an early date, the Koks attracting official support and the Afrikaners official anger. Klaas Afrikaner, like Adam Kok, made his way up to the Orange River before the 1770s. There he worked for one of the most prominent of the white frontiersmen on the Northern frontier, Petrus Pienaar.⁵⁵ Together with Claas and Piet Barend he accompanied Gordon for some of the stages of his journey along the Orange River and was described as being "our best shot".⁵⁶ The chances are excellent that Klaas was the same man as /Garuxameb, the father of Jager and Titus Afrikaner, and the grandfather of Jonker Afrikaner - all future leaders of the Afrikaner Oorlams.

One further example of a "Bastaard" or Oorlam bandit who was to have an early impact on the Khoisan societies of the Orange River should be mentioned. Wikar records that in the 1770s the Khoisan of the Middle Orange River had been terrorised by a "Bastard-Hottentot" named Cupido Roggevelt. This individual had raided a large "Bushman" kraal at the ominously named site Gei//ob, "Big Death", on the Orange River, and stolen their cattle. Cupido Roggevelt, whose name reflects both his possible slave origins as well as his habitual *locum operandi* had also attacked the Namnykoa or Kaross-wearers at Paarden Island, east of the Augrabies Falls. The fearful

54. J. du Bruyn, "The Oorlams Afrikaners: From Dependence to Dominance, c.1760-1823" (Paper delivered to the S.A. Historical Society Conference, Durban, July 1981); H. Vedder, *South West Africa in the Early Days* (Berlin, 1934; reprint 1966) p.179; CA, C 139, 13 Jan. 1761, pp. 60-62; 8 Sept 1761, pp.416-420; CJ 3189 (Lists of Convicts sent to Robben Island, 1758-1802) pp.37, 152 and 174. Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.93-98.

55. For Pienaar see chapter 9 above.

56. Gordon, 27 Nov. 1779, 8 Dec. 1779, 10 Dec. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.362, 364, 367.

memory of his visit was still fresh in their minds when Wikar visited them in 1779.⁵⁷ Though Cupido Roggevelt seems to have been captured by colonial authorities and imprisoned on Robben Island,⁵⁸ his attacks were an ominous sign that the relative peace and stability of the Khoisan societies of the Middle Orange River were about to disappear.

THE EINIQUA, SAN AND KORANA OF THE MIDDLE ORANGE RIVER, C.1700-1780

The principal Khoikhoi inhabitants of the Middle Orange River were the Einiqua.⁵⁹ Too great a distinction between Einiqua, Namaqua and Korana should not, however, be made since it has been shown that they all belong to the same language group, namely the Orange River Khoikhoi.⁶⁰ This language group may be split into two primary dialects - Nama to the west and !Kora to the east. The Einiqua, (who were divided into a number of subgroups occupying different regions of the middle Orange) should thus be seen as falling between the two principal dialects with their various subgroups displaying similarities to other Namaqua or Korana, depending on their location.⁶¹ The most westerly of the Einiqua subgroups, and hence the closest to the Namaqua, were the Namnykoa.⁶²

These people were more truly riverine than either the Namaqua to the west or the Korana to the east, though they remained, nonetheless, essentially pastoralist. The Namnykoa were divided into three kraals, two of which were on Paarden Eiland above the Augrabies Falls and the third on another island an hour's journey further upstream. Wikar estimated their settlements to consist of 40 huts with over 300 sheep and goats, and 150 cattle (with a lot more hidden away on the far side of the river). Their stock was the "best and fattest" Wikar had ever seen.⁶³ The islands were

57. Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.47, 123-125.

58. CA, C 163 (Resolutions of Council of Policy: Marginalia) p.678; CJ 3189, pp.53, 237. These documents indicate that Cupido Roggevelt was imprisoned on Robben Island on 10 June 1772 and released, died or escaped on 25 June 1782.

59. "Einiqua" was a term based on a San word for the Orange River, "(')ein", "(T)Ein" or "Ein," and means, literally, "People of the River". See Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.320-328.

60. C. Ehret, "The First Spread of Food Production to Southern Africa" in C. Ehret and M. Posnansky (eds.), *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (Berkeley, 1982) p.159; Gordon stated that the Einiqua "are all Hottentots and speak slightly differently from the Namaquas", 28 Sept 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.299.

61. Ehret, "Food Production", p.159.

62. The Namnykoa or Namnequa were also known as the "Kaross Wearers" (Krosdraggers, kroshebers) and, in 1779, were to be found in the vicinity of the Augrabies Falls. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.31, 119-121; Gordon, 16 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.323-4; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.741-744.

63. Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.121-125.

covered with luxuriant grasses, and wild cucumbers, but although the soil was very fertile the only crop to be grown by the Namnykoa was dagga.⁶⁴ These riches were protected by a series of streams, islands and dense bushes. Additional resources could be obtained by fishing in the river or by hunting the plentiful game along its banks.

The Namnykoa were quite at home in the river, being skilled at swimming across it with the aid of swimming sticks, or floating their possessions across on rafts. According to Wikar, as soon as the children began to walk "their playful occupation (was) to be in the water all day".⁶⁵

Members from the various kraals did not feel constrained to stay within their group's particular territory and, unless they were at war with another group (as was the case in the 1770's between the Namnykoa and the Gyziqua) wandered fairly freely along the river, socialising with both Khoikhoi and San societies. The smaller kraals would often move some kilometres upstream or downstream from their old position if they deemed such a move favourable or necessary. A rise in the river's water level, for instance, was often a strong incentive to pack up the reed-mat huts and move to a higher location. The fluidity of these groups is further demonstrated by the existence of Khoikhoi who were living with San, and Great Namaqua who lived with the Kaukoa.⁶⁶

In so far as relationships with other groups were concerned the Namnykoa "had war" with their Einiqua neighbours, the Kaukoa, (also known as the Kauk Eijs, Cutting Kraal or Snijersvolk) who lived on the Skanskop and other islands west of Keimoes.⁶⁷ A similar state of affairs existed with the Aukokoa (Narrow Cheeks or Nouwangen) of Canon Island and the other islands to the east of Keimoes.⁶⁸ Even further to the east were the Gyzikoa (or Twin Kraal people) with whom

64. Gordon, 18 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.326. "This they got from the Namaquas, and they from us". Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.121-123.

65. Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.129.

66. Gordon, 28 Sept., 15 Oct., and 26 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.299, 322-3, 336, 338.

67. Mossop, *Wikaar*, pp.14 and 137; Gordon, 28 Sept., and 24 Oct. 1779 in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.335 and 300; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.588-590, speculates that their name "cutting kraal" derives from their custom of excising a testicle. A noteworthy custom, common to many Einiqua (including kraals like the Husingais or Spider Kraal who were, strictly speaking, Korana) was the removal, by surgery, of one of a man's testicles, or else the amputation of the first joint of the ring finger; see Gordon, 28 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.299.

68. Wikar, and following him, Mossop (*Wikaar*, pp.14, 137-8, 227) identify the Aukokoa as the Nouwange or the Narrow Cheeks. Gordon, however, refers to them as the Ogokwa (18 Oct. 1779 and 25 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.327, 335-6). Engelbrecht ("Tribes of Wikar", p.227 n.3) and Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.265-274 speculate that the Ogokwa were, originally, the Cochoqua of the Cape who trekked northwards sometime during the eighteenth century and that they were thus "Groot Koranas". This theory is, in my opinion, unlikely, but see following pages for commentary. We should note, however, that Wikar noted that the Aukuo "received me very well, because I was the first Dutchman they had ever seen. I and my horse were a source of the greatest wonder to

the Namnykoa were also at war. The Gyzikoa, though a mixture of Korana and Ba Tlaping, were also considered to be Einiqua.⁶⁹ Such fighting as took place involved the theft of livestock from one another and some loss of human life. The picture that emerges is that before 1780 there existed a fairly low intensity, virtually institutionalised, practice of raiding by one riverine group upon another. This did not, it seems, unduly disturb the balance of power along the river, for if the Namnykoa captured a great many cattle one year the Gyzikoa retook them the next.⁷⁰

The Namnykoa enjoyed slightly better relationships with the local San, some of whom were their clients. The Anoe eijs (Heldere or Bright Kraal people) for instance, who lived at the Augrabies Falls, were described by Gordon as being "cattle-less Bushmen or of the Namneyqua who do not have cattle". In another entry he calls them "Eniquas who because of a quarrel with the Namnykoa Kraal have lost all their stock but they are once more good friends".⁷¹ The Anoe eijs numbered about 100 and lived by catching fish (in wicker traps), hunting and digging pits to trap hippopotami, elephant and rhinoceros. Those San, who were found along the river between Goodhouse and the Augrabies Falls were described, by Wikar, as being, for the most part, on friendly terms with the Einiqua, but enemies of the Namaqua.⁷² Gordon found them to be very friendly and helpful and distinguished two main branches - the River and the Sandveld San - though he acknowledged them to be one people.⁷³ Wikar's names for these people - Chaboup and Samgomomkoa - mean, simply San or Bushmen in Nama.⁷⁴ They had a few cattle and yet were

them, and they were more afraid of a horse than of a rhino or a ferocious wild animal," (Mossop, *Wikar*, p.139). This is hardly an appropriate response from a group purported to be colonial fugitives.

69. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.31; Gordon, 26 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.336-341, notes that they were also called "Combecoe" or "Combeqca". Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.455-6. They were not, as Nienaber (p.364) suggests, a branch of the Tswana that had inter-married with Korana and Ogoqua but, as Gordon's account makes clear, a branch of the Khoikhoi who had inter-married with some Tswana. They made huts like the other Einiqua, milked cattle and danced like Namaqua.

70. As Gordon travelled down the river from one group to the next he noted: "thus one kraal complains about the other" and warned him to be on his guard against other Khoi "saying that they were treacherous". Also: "They were bad friends with their neighbours, according to their custom" (Gordon, 26 Oct., 19 Oct., 28 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.336, 328 and 341-2). See also Wikar, in Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.31, 127.

71. Gordon, 15 and 16 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.322, 324. Wikar commented, on visiting the Gyzikoa, that: "There was a large Bushman kraal here; they were the Gyzikoas' Bushmen, for every tribe that owns cattle also has a number of Bushmen under its protection..." (Mossop, *Wikar*, p.16).

72. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.31.

73. Gordon, 28 Sept., 1 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.299, 303. Gordon made the following observation about the San of the Orange River, "I am amazed at the Bushmen, for although everything is lying around freely within reach, they will not touch anything to take it away; and although we are so weak in this distant land full of wild animals, we are as much at ease, although on our guard, as in the heart of the Cape. In comparing this with the descriptions given by those who find all sorts of danger even in the vicinity of the Cape, one realises how little real danger there is, except in people's minds." 15 Oct. 1779, *Gordon*, p.323.

74. Mossop, *Wikar*, pp.14-15, 30-31; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.231-2; 829-8.

called San, as were the Nanningai (Mountain climbers), a San group with cattle on the northern side of the Orange, opposite Pella.⁷⁵ Further groups of San called the Noe Eis and Ei Eis lived to the north of the Augrabies Falls whilst, to the east, (i.e. near Kakamas) were the Kein Eis San.⁷⁶ Along the Hartbees River which flowed, occasionally, from the interior of Bushmanland to the south lived the Cammagakoa San (Cammagakoa being the San word for the people of the Hartbees River). Further to the south this river was called the Sak River because it disappeared into the sand, before re-emerging as the Hartbees River near present day Kenhardt. There were pools of water and even hippopotami to be found along the Hartbees River and the Cammagakoa were quite used to travelling to and from the Orange by way of the Hartbees River.⁷⁷ To the east of the Cammagakoa San, and south of Keimoes dwelt the Au Nameiqua San, whilst to the north of the Aukokoa were the Nou Ei Koa and Hoekeikoe San. The San in the vicinity of present day Upington were known as the Koun ei Na.⁷⁸

The closest Einiqua to the Namnykoa were the Kaukoa (Cutting Kraal) of Skanskop Island. This community numbered a total of twenty huts and was, of course, in enmity with its neighbours, especially the Aukokoa further east. Although they had some livestock much had been lost to the Aukokoa and their principal activity was fishing.⁷⁹

The Aukokoa, who lived only three hours journey eastwards from the Kaukoa, rated the Gyzikoa as their major enemy though they had also been attacked by the Korana. These foes, according to the Aukokoa, took no prisoners, not even women and children, killing all who fell into their hands. Despite these ferocious eastern neighbours the Aukokoa seemed to be quite well off in the 1770s, situated as they were on Canon Island and its adjacent islets. This position, combined with the forests of the river bank, gave them excellent protection, whilst the very fine grazing beyond the river allowed their flocks and herds to prosper. The islands were seldom flooded and such favourable circumstances supported about 100 men, women and children in more than 23 huts. The Aukokoa were also in regular contact with the Ba Thlaping, having friends among them, but

75. Mossop, *Wikar*, p.36; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.744-745.

76. Gordon, 16 Oct., 23 Oct., 30 Oct., 7 Nov., 11 Nov. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.324, 333, 335, 343, 351, 354; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.749-750; 320-328; 597-598.

77. Gordon, 20 Oct., 23 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, 328, 333.

78. Gordon, 26-27 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.336, 338-9.

79. Gordon, 25 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, p.335.

an outbreak of smallpox amongst the latter had somewhat restricted the development of further relationships.⁸⁰

The Gyzikoa themselves, who seemed to have been at war with all the other Einiqua, lived about a seven and half hour march upstream from the Aukokoa. Gordon found them to be completely friendly, numbering about 200 strong and living in two kraals with a combined total of approximately thirty-seven huts. In appearance and nature they seemed to be a mixture of Tswana and Khoikhoi, with the latter influence predominant. Gordon was able to identify some Tswana amongst them who understood the Xhosa with which he addressed them but, in most respects, the Gyzikoa were Einiqua. The Gyzikoa claimed that the Tswana had once lived there but had been driven away by them and the Korana.⁸¹

To the east of the Gyzikoa, in the vicinity of Kheis, lived the first of the Korana groups; the Kouringeis (Little Korana, Hoogstanders or Proud People).⁸² Wikar described them as having three kraals (only one of which he counted, having 49 huts) and much livestock. "These Kouringgais are the first of the little Korakkoo we met, for the greater part resembling the Eynikkoo in build and dress, yet they are an entirely different tribe, for they knew little of the tribes lower down."⁸³ As far as Gordon was concerned the Einiqua and the Korana were the same people - as indeed they were since they were both Khoikhoi and members of the same language group. Some of the Kouringeis, like the Gyzikoa, displayed Tswana influences in their physiognomy. They were divided into two kraals of about 20 huts each and, though well provided with livestock, were a lot less generous with it than their neighbours to the west, failing to provide Gordon and his party with any. As allies or clients they had the Moncoboo San who were more hostile (and ugly) than any others met by Gordon on his journey along the river.⁸⁴

80. Gordon, 26 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.336-338; Wikar (Mossop, *Wika*, pp.137-139) estimated that they had 300 cattle and 400 or 500 sheep. He also states that they had 40 huts and that the Kaukoa were subordinate to them. Perhaps Gordon only saw one half of the kraal.

81. Gordon, 27 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.339-342. See note 78 above. Engelbrecht (in *Korana*, pp.76-78) believes the Gyzikoa were a mixture of Korana and Ba Thlaping instead of Einiqua and Ba Thlaping.

82. L.F. Maingard, "Studies in Korana history, customs and language", *Bantu Studies*, Vol. VI, 1932, pp.111, believed that the Kouringeis were the same people as the Gorinaiqua, mentioned by Van Riebeeck in 1657, and known to the Dutch as the Capemen. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, p.5, agreed and Nienaber presents evidence to support the theory (*Stamname*, pp.410-421). The reasons for my disagreement with these scholars (whose knowledge of Khoisan and Koana societies I cannot pretend to approach) will be found between pp.301-307 below.

83. Mossop, *Wika*, p.165.

84. Gordon, 1-3 Nov. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.344, 346, 347.

East of the Kouringais lived the Hoeking Eis (Scorpion Kraal),⁸⁵ a kraal of about 20 huts. They were a branch of the Great Korana who lived in the vicinity of present day Koegas Bridge, north-west of Prieska, and were thus distinct from the Kouringeis, who were Little Korana. These were the most easterly of the groups visited by Wikar in 1779 but Gordon, who journeyed further, encountered the Nokukeis Kraal, whose people "had never seen anyone from our colony and were very afraid". They numbered over a hundred strong and Gordon referred to them as a second section of the Hoeking Eis. Amongst them were two Briqua or Tswana, whilst the presence of large numbers of Tswana karosses and skins was further evidence of contact between the two people.⁸⁶

Beyond the Hoeking Eis, east of present day Prieska, were various groups of Korana who inhabited the regions both north and south of the Orange River. The questions of their origins, as noted above, is a vexed one, and does not allow for definitive pronouncements. It is, however, necessary to say something about these, the most easterly of the riverine Khoisan. Paradoxically, though they were the last to be visited by the colonists in the eighteenth century they were, it seems, one of the first to have been affected by colonial expansion. Despite this early disruption, and despite the violent upheavals of the late eighteenth century, the Korana survived, and were strong enough to fight two anti-colonial wars between 1868 and 1879 before they were crushed.

Evidence for early colonial pressure on the Korana is closely linked to the debate concerning their origins. This in turn, is related to the debate concerning the origins of the Khoikoi as a whole. Before proceeding further, therefore, these topics will have to be investigated.

At present the most widely accepted model concerning Khoikhoi origins is the synthesis proposed by Elphick.⁸⁷ Somewhere in the north-east of present day Botswana a group of San, at an unknown time and over a period of indeterminate duration, acquired both sufficient livestock and the necessary set of attitudes to enable them to become pastoralists. Having become pastoralists (without, however, losing the skills or ignoring the resources of hunting and gathering) these proto-Khoikhoi, their livestock and their culture arrived at the Orange River in the vicinity, possibly, of the Vaal River's confluence. From here a dispersal of pastoralism and people took

85. Gordon, 4 Nov. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.347-8; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.498-501.

86. Gordon, 4-7 Nov. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, pp.347-351; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.749-750; Engelbrecht, "Tribes of Wikar", p.231; *Korana*, p.27. It was at this point that Gordon turned back, a site identified by A.B. Smith as near Knypgat se Berg, south of Debeerskloof (29°12.5'S : 22°17.5'E). This is just downriver from Koegasbrug. See A.B. Smith, "In the Footsteps of Gordon", *Quarterly Bulletin of the S.A. Library*, 1991.

87. Elphick, *Khoikhoi*, pp.3-22.

place. Some Khoikhoi moved southwards roughly parallel to the Seekoei River and on reaching the Sunday's River, a gradual westerly expansion took place until the south-western Cape was reached. (Easterly expansion was restricted by the presence of agro-pastoralist, Bantu speaking groups who inhabited the better-watered Eastern regions). Khoikhoi pastoralists also dispersed, naturally, down the Orange River to the West coast. This line of advance then bifurcated into a northern (Great Namaqua) and southern section. Those Little Namaqua who continued south found themselves contesting the resources of the south-western Cape with the vanguard of the Southern Khoikhoi, thus closing the circle of Khoikhoi dispersal. The arid or mountainous parts of the interior were left, largely, to the San.

The above explanation of the expansion routes of the Khoikhoi has come under increasing critical scrutiny. Doubt has been expressed as to whether the north-east of Botswana was the core area of origin for Khoikhoi pastoralists whilst the early and extensive sequence of dates for pastoral activity from archaeological sites in the southern Cape suggests an extremely rapid dispersal of livestock. Greater clarity will, doubtless, emerge, once more archaeological research is done but, for the time being, the present model of Khoikhoi expansion is the most plausible available.⁸⁸ However one of the most contentious details within the larger structure of the model is the precise placing of the Korana.

Their situation at the junction of the Vaal and Orange River, is most significant, for this was the region from which the major southerly and westerly dispersal of the Khoikhoi allegedly occurred. But this factor does not necessarily give the Korana a primacy of place nor antiquity amongst Khoikhoi groups. The region was a frontier zone between Tswana, Khoikhoi and San, as well as between pastoralism, agriculture and hunting. Its human composition was thus subject to a variety of environmental, cultural and ethnic influences.

It should be stressed that our knowledge of this section of the River during the eighteenth century is extremely limited since we lack the detailed observations of a Wikar or a Gordon for these regions. Gordon did, in fact, visit the Orange River at the confluence of the Caledon in December 1777, and came close to its banks whilst travelling up the Seekoei River in November 1777 and

88. See A.B. Smith, "The Origins and Demise of the Khoikhoi: The Debate", *S.A. Historical Journal* 23, 1990, pp.3-14; and "On Becoming Herders: Khoikhoi and San Ethnicity in Southern Africa", *African Studies* 50, 1, 1991, for comments on the Elphick model. Also H.J. Deacon, Janette Deacon, Mary Brooker and M.L. Wilson, "The Evidence for Herding at Boomplaas Cave in the Southern Cape, South Africa", *S.A. Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. XXXIII, (127), June 1978, and M.L. Wilson, "The Problem of the Origin of the Khoikhoi", *The Digging Stick* 6 (1), April 1989.

October 1778. The observations he made here are most illuminating (and will be discussed below) but the vital section of the river with which we are concerned here, namely, that which was occupied by the Korana and which stretched roughly, from Prieska to the Seekoei River, was not visited by record-leaving travellers until the beginning of the nineteenth century. By this time this section of the river was in turmoil and the various Korana groups, apart from having experienced radical disruption and displacement, consisted not only of Korana, but of other Khoi, San, "Bastaards" and Oorlam members.

This inherent volatility was complicated by the fact that, historically, the area served as a place of refuge for groups of Khoikhoi who were fleeing from the Dutch colonists. Those authorities who have written detailed studies on the Korana point to the fact that it is necessary to regard them as the product of a) the original Khoikhoi groups of the area and b) later migrations of Khoikhoi groups from the south.⁸⁹ Though this latter view has been dismissed by Ehret as "an historian's fantasy",⁹⁰ there is too much evidence in support of the idea of a "reverse migration" to dismiss it this lightly and since this evidence has a direct bearing on the subject of the colonial disruptions of the Khoisan societies of the Orange River it is far from irrelevant.

The first recorded tradition to suggest that some of the Korana may have had their origins in the southern Cape was made in 1836 when Hanto, a Taaibosch chief of the Umpukani Korana, told the missionary Arbousset that "eight generations ago there lived in the neighbourhood of the Cape of Good Hope a chief named Kora, who had given his name to the tribe of the Korannas".⁹¹ Engelbrecht argues that "the chief of the senior clan, which perpetuated his name, was also the chief of the whole tribe, which might likewise be called after him". Thus, assuming that there was a chief !Ora, the people of his clan would be !Ora -//?eis, and the people in general would be called !Orana.⁹² Stow, aware of this tradition, writing some thirty years before Engelbrecht, believed that the Gorachouqua, or Tobacco Thieves, mentioned in Van Riebeeck's diary were the ancestors of the Korana, and that Kora had derived his name from the chief of the Gorachouqua who was called Goro or Choro.⁹³ According to Hanto's account Kora's son, Eikomo, retreated

89. See in particular, L.F. Maingard, "The lost tribes of the Cape", *S.A. Journal of Science*, XXVIII, Nov. 1931, pp.487-504; Maingard, "Studies in Korana History"; Engelbrecht, *Korana*; and Nienaber, *Stamname*.

90. Ehret, "Food Production", p.159.

91. Maingard, "The lost tribes of the Cape", *South African Journal of Science*, XXVIII, Nov. 1931, p.503.

92. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.13-14.

93. G.W. Stow, *The Native Races of South Africa* (London 1905; reprint, Cape Town 1964), p.268.

from the encroachments of the Europeans, first to the Brak and later to the Orange River. Here they reached an agreement with the San and settled in the vicinity of present day Griquatown.⁹⁴

This tradition was supported by evidence from another Taaibosch chief, Massouw Rijt Taaibosch, chief of the Mamusa branch of Korana, in 1869. Massouw explained that the Korana had come from Cape Town and that their chief had been Kora. After trouble with the whites they had fled into the Hottentots-Holland mountains and from there to the Koup, through the Nieuweveld range of mountains, then to Spitzkop, then up the course of the Great Brak river and thus to the south banks of the Orange River at Sandrift. Further support for this tradition comes from the German missionary Wangemann who worked amongst the Katse (/Hoa-//?eis) Korana in the nineteenth century. He recorded that the Katse left the vicinity of Cape Town in the eighteenth century under pressure from the Europeans and trekked through the Swartberge, across the Koup, across the rivers Gamka and Tweke, between the Nieuweveld mountains and the Winterberge until, between Schietfontein and Victoria West, they crossed the Praamberge. Eventually they reached the Orange River where, not without considerable conflict from the San, they dispersed into smaller units.⁹⁵ Engelbrecht is able to cite two further recorded instances of the above tradition and his own interviews with three Katse informants reinforces the general impression that there was a northward migration of Korana to the Orange River in the eighteenth century.⁹⁶

Apart from the oral traditions of the Korana, which have been cited above, there is other evidence which suggests that sections of the Korana, were to be found in the Eastern Cape in the early eighteenth century. Gordon, who was travelling just west of the Sneeu Berg in 1777, passed a large mound of stones, twenty feet in diameter. He remarked that:

it is the grave of one of the chiefs of the Camdebo Hottentots (called the Koranna People). He was killed by an elephant. There are none of these people here any more, except a few with the farmers.⁹⁷

Further to the east he commented that there were some Khoikhoi on the Sneeu Berg and the Fish River with both the *trekboers* and the Xhosa who "call themselves there nothing but Cora - thus

94. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.3-4; 13-14; Stow, *Native Races*, p.269; T. Strauss, *War along the Orange: The Korana and the Northern Border Wars of 1868-9 and 1878-9* (Cape Town, 1979), p.2. One of Engelbrecht's informants, Benjamin Kats, had heard old people say that Kora's son was named !GeiXam which Engelbrecht believes is the same as Eikomer.

95. Maingard, "Studies in Korana History", p.107; Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.14-15; Strauss, *War Along the Orange*, pp.2-3.

96. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, p.17.

97. Gordon, 13 Nov. 1777, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.79.

Coranas in the plural".⁹⁸ From this it would appear that some time before 1770 a group of Khoikhoi called Korana lived south and east of the Nieuweveld before they dispersed, some to seek employment with the colonists and Xhosa whilst others, no doubt, went north to the Orange River.

It has been necessary to go into considerable detail concerning the evidence for the southern origins of some of the Korana groups for several reasons. Although none of the details by themselves amount to conclusive proof of a northern migration by Korana to the Orange River, taken together they cannot be ignored. There was definitely a considerable immigration of southern Khoikhoi groups to the eastern Orange River in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Strauss is surely correct to argue that:

With so much uncertainty about the general pattern of Khoikhoi migration, it is extremely difficult to arrive at any certain conclusion on the more specific issue of Korana origins ... and in the face of so many varied and contradictory oral traditions any reconstruction regarding origins and migration routes must necessarily remain speculation. However, there is no reason to question the claim that the ancestors of some of them had lived at the Cape in the 17th century and had later moved northwards in scattered groups and at different times, reaching the Orange at various points.⁹⁹

We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that not all Korana were comparatively recent arrivals to the Orange River. In a hurried footnote, added as his book was going to press, Engelbrecht explained that he had come to the conclusion that there were two large divisions of Korana: (1) that of the Right Hand, or the Great Korana; and (2) that of the Left Hand division with the Links tribe. Engelbrecht admitted that "as the above conclusions assumed definite form only at the time of going to the press, the author regrets that he has not been able to apply them in these pages with a view of classifying the different Kora tribes and units more adequately".¹⁰⁰ It is significant though that all of the traditions of a migration from the south came from Great Korana or Korana of the right hand (e.g. Taaibosch) whereas no such traditions were found amongst the Links (Left Hand or the Little Korana). This is but one of the reasons why Engelbrecht's attempts to prove that the Goringhaiqua (Capemen or Peninsulars) of Van Riebeeck's time at the Cape were the same people as the Kouringais (Little Korana) of the Orange River are unconvincing. Had he had the time he might well have revised his ideas since his evidence here is based not on oral tradition but on the apparent similarity of the names. It is

98. Gordon, 16 Dec. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.114.

99. Strauss, *War Along the Orange*, p.6.

100. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, p.25.

far more sensible to assume that the Little Korana were that branch of the Korana who had not travelled, either to or from the Cape, but who had remained at the River. If this is the case how could both groups be considered "Korana"? What was the connection between the Great and Little Korana?

It should be stressed that "Korana" is somewhat of a catch-all term which, in the nineteenth century, was used to describe a great hotchpotch of diverse and fragmented peoples.¹⁰¹ It would be wrong to think that there was such an entity, with finite boundaries, as the outmoded term Korana "tribe". Rather, we should think of "Korana" as a word which was applied to groups of predominantly (but not exclusively) Khoikhoi origin who had, indeed, been severely dislocated by the expansion of the colonial frontier. As these groups moved northwards to the Orange, they became absorbtionist rather than exclusivist, incorporating the shattered remnants of other fugitive groups, or else exercising a type of hegemony over weaker neighbours. In the chaotic border area of the Vaal-Orange confluence they began to dominate the weaker Einiqua groups (themselves amalgamations of diverse riverine peoples) to the west, and to force the Tswana to withdraw to the north.¹⁰² It is very likely then that the "Little Korana" were, in fact, Einiqua groups which had been partially absorbed into the loose associations of the intrusive "Great Korana". Evidence will be presented below that this process of intrusion accelerated between 1779 and 1786 as the "Great Korana" put more and more pressure on the Einiqua. After 1786, however, Korana expansion was, to an extent, deflected by the increasingly disruptive colonial presence along the river. In the face of this combined assault Einiqua identity disappeared and the Khoikhoi "people of the river" merged into the Korana.

There is additional evidence in support of the hypothesis that the "Little Korana" were originally Einiqua who had been at the Orange River for longer than the "Great Korana". It is to be found in the close and cordial relationships which existed between the Hoelsing eis (Spider Kraal) Little Korana and the San of the Agter Sneecuberg/Seekoei River area to the east.

Eighteenth century Dutch colonists called the San of the eastern Cape interior "Chinese" or "Sneecuberg" Bushmen. These San called themselves the Swy eis, but they were also known as the

101. This is a point that both Engelbrecht and Nienaber make, stressing that the term "Korana" includes many sub-divisions, not all of which are known, and whose precise relationship to each other is obscure. See Engelbrecht, *Korana*, Part I and Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.647-698.

102. See for instance Gordon's remark that Tswana had once inhabited that part of the river which, in 1779, was occupied by the Gyzikoa but that "the Coraqua and Einiqua have driven them from here". Gordon, 28 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.341.

Oesjswana or Saana.¹⁰³ When Gordon first encountered the Hoelsing eis (or Spider Kraal) near the present site of Pella, far to the west of the Sneeu-berg, the Little Korana claimed to be "good friends of the Bushmen who fight with the Sneeu-berg farmers". Gordon also stated that they (the Hoelsing eis) were to be found "almost behind the Sneeu-berg on the side of the River and own many cattle. The Coraqua are situated a little further up on the other side of the river".¹⁰⁴ What emerges from this account despite some understandable geographical vagueness on Gordon's part is that a) the Hoelsing eis were friendly with the Swy eis; b) they (the Hoelsing eis) were accustomed to travelling vast distances up the River (following the river from Pella to the Seekoe River is over 800 km); and c) that they were distinct from the Korana to the north-east of them. It is highly unlikely that the Hoelsing eis had a permanent base behind the Sneeu-berg (since this, as Gordon's two journeys up the Seekoei River in 1777, proved, was undoubtedly Swy ei territory) but probable that they were accustomed, with the approval of the Swy eis, to graze their cattle far up the river.

This evidence, as well as the evidence cited earlier concerning amicable relationships enjoyed between the Einiqua and the San, contrasts dramatically with the information we have concerning relationships between the Great Korana and the San. A significant feature of all of the Great Korana traditions of migration from the south is that they mention bitter fighting and hostility with the San (and this situation does not seem to have improved by the 19th century). The oral traditions speak of having to come to terms with the local San - not with the local Khoikhoi - and the violent contestations that are remembered would be in keeping with the sudden intrusion of refugee groups into an area where, previously, a well-regulated arrangement of sharing resources between Khoikhoi and San had existed.¹⁰⁵

The San were, at any rate, a more powerful presence in the east than they were elsewhere along the river. This was particularly true of the Swy eis of the Sneeu-berg who managed (with the help of the terrain of their locality) to check the expansion of the *trekboers* for over half a century. How much more of an obstacle must they have presented to the Great Korana? The significance of the route taken by the migrating Korana of the south in order to reach the Orange River is that

103. Gordon, 13 Nov. 1777 and 12 Nov. 1778, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 1, pp.79 and 194. Raper and Boucher read Gordon's writing as "Sunei", whereas Patrick Cullinan reads "Swy e'i". In his entry in *Khoekhoense Stamname* (p.251) Nienaber has the spelling "Swe'ei though the date has been incorrectly copied as 12.11.1777 instead of 12.11.1778. See also V.S. Forbes (ed.), *Anders Sparrman, A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope... from the year 1772-1776* (Cape Town, reprint 1975, 1977) Vol. 1, p.219, Vol. 2, p.113.

104. Gordon, 28 Sept. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. II, p.300. Wikar also states that the "Gyzikoa's Bushmen ... spoke the Finch or Chinese language just like the Bushmen of the Sneeu-berg", Mossop, *Wikar*, p.161.

105. See for instance Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.16-19.

it skirted the Swy eis in the east whilst attempting to avoid the low rainfall, harsh environment and hostile San of the interior north-west of the Nieuweveld escarpment. This route was not however that attractive to the *trekboers* of the eastern frontier when they entered the region in the 1770s. They preferred to fight for the richer pasture and better rainfall of the areas occupied by the Swy eis. The result was that in the east their arrival at the Orange River was delayed until the next century. Consequently the major colonial threat to the Khoisan societies of the river in the eighteenth century came from the south-west and, having completed our survey of these societies, we should return to a consideration of the growing colonial presence along the River from the 1770s.

Reivers Across the River, 1770-1797

THE HANTAM AND THE VAN ZIJLS

The other frontier district which by the 1770s was beginning to impinge directly on the Orange River was that which was called the Hantam. The Hantam derives its name from the solitary mountain which lies at the north-westerly end of the Onder Roggeveld.¹ To the south-west lay the Bokkeveld mountains, to the north-west, Namaqualand, and to the north - between it and the Orange River - lay miles and miles of Bushmanland. Its position, as well as certain environmental features, made it a key region in the north-western frontier zone.² Strategically it formed a link between the distant outpost of Namaqualand and the rest of the colonial frontier. Remote though the Hantam was, it was tied far more tightly than was Namaqualand to the production and exchange networks which linked Cape Town to the pastoralists of the interior. This fact may be demonstrated by the presence, or influence, in the Hantam of some of the richest agriculturalists in the colony. One such man was Servaas van Breda, who, in 1783, owned five farms in the Onder Bokkeveld (putting him in the Hantam district) and two in Namaqualand. Van Breda was not actually resident in the Hantam (being a Burger-Lieutenant in Cape Town) but employed Coert or Jacobus Ryk to look after his business in the district.³ Another notable was Sebastiaan Valentyn van Reenen, a member of the rich and powerful Van Reenen family which owned extensive property throughout the colony and had the meat contract in its possession. Sebastiaan, (who's wife was a sister of Servaas van Breda's wife) owned four farms in the area in his name but one of his brothers, Jacobus Arnoldus, owned two, while another brother, Jacob, owned another. It is of interest to note that Sebastiaan's "regent" or overseer was Claas Bastart, very likely the same Claas Bastart who was known to Wikar and Gordon, and who had worked for Petrus Pienaar.⁴

1. The Hantam is named after the edible tuber of the plant Heyntame, *Pelargonium bifolium*, which shows a red colour in cross section, hence - the mountain of the red bulb. C.A. Smith, *Common names of South African Plants* (Pretoria, 1966) p.247; Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica A*** (Pretoria, 1977) pp.519-521.

2. Not only was the Hantam better watered than its surroundings but the grazing on top of the mountain was good and free from the reach of horse sickness. See E.C. Godee-Molsbergen, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse tijd*, 4 volumes (The Hague, 1916-1932) p.180, note 1.

3. CA, RLR 30, 16 April 1783, pp.24-28; RLR 31, 17 Oct. 1783, p.7; CA, 1/STB 10/163, J. van Zijl to Landdrost, 6 Aug. 1784; C.C. de Villiers and C. Pama, *Geslagsregisters Van Die Ou Kaapse Families*, 2 vols., (Cape Town, 1981) p.97.

4. CA, RLR 31, 17 Oct. 1783, pp.8-10, 16; De Villiers and Pama, p.764; CA 1/STB 10/163, J. van Zijl to Landdrost, 6 Aug. 1784. Sebastiaan van Reenen went with Paterson and Gordon on their trip to the Orange River mouth in 1779. Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, pp.241, 250. Jacobus van Reenen, Sebastiaan's elder brother, also joined the group. He was described by Gordon as having just returned from the Great River and by Paterson as

Claas Bastart was not the only "Bastaard" in the region, for the local *Veldwagtmeester* Van Zijl complained that Van Reenen and the widow of Schalk Burger did not have "christen" (or white) *knechts* on their farms. In Van Zijl's view this caused the farms to become overpopulated with thieving "jongens en hottentots" who were up to no good.⁵

Whilst men like Van Breda and the Van Reenens controlled many and the best of the farms in the Hantam they did not seem to pull their weight when it came to fighting in or provisioning commandos. Nor did their servants heed the orders to participate in commandos, claiming that the *veldwagtmeester* had no authority to order them to join.⁶ This caused considerable resentment amongst the less wealthy inhabitants of the district and turned *Veldwagtmeester*, Johannes van Zijl, against them. It was he who voiced the discontent of the poorer white farmers, and drew attention to disparities in wealth which existed in 1784. Van Zijl referred to poor and young beginners in the district who had a mere 300 to 400 sheep. Some had even less than this number so that, in reality, what they had was as good as nothing. Van Zijl suggested that those with many farms should be obliged to supply proportionately more towards the Company's needs than those who were poor, thereby affording the less fortunate some relief.⁷

Van Zijl's letter to the authorities not only draws attention to the fact that it was hard for *trekboers* to establish themselves in the northern frontier districts in the face of rich and powerful farmers, it also highlights the constant and continuous necessity of commando duty in a region where the Khoisan were still violently resisting *trekboer* expansion. Hardly a year elapsed between 1774 (the year of the General Commando) and 1784 when Khoisan attacks had not provoked a vengeful commando to campaign beyond the Hantam into Bushmanland. In 1776, for instance the *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch seriously considered the appointment of a permanent force of men - "a Ruijterwagt" - to patrol the Hantam and Bokkeveld district in order to counter Khoisan attacks. In August 1777 the *veldwagtmeester* of the Bokkeveld over the Doorn River and the Hantam, Adriaan van Zijl, reported extensive Khoisan attacks in the district. In 1778 came disturbing news that the Bokkeveld and the Roggeveld Khoisan were in alliance against the colonists whilst further attacks occurred in the Onder Bokkeveld-Hantam district. The situation

having been "eastward to shoot elephants". V.S. Forbes and J. Rourke (eds.), *Paterson's Cape Travels, 1777-1779*, (Johannesburg, 1980) p.154.

5. CA, 1/STB 10/163, J. van Zijl to Landdrost, 6 Aug. 1784.

6. For example Coert Ryk, Van Breda's farm supervisor, refused to go on commando on the grounds that his boss had forbidden him to do so. CA, 1/STB 10/163 A. van Zijl to Landdrost, 7 Oct. 1785. See also Report of Field Sergeant Adriaan van Zyl, 2 Nov. 1778, in Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. 111, p.77.

7. CA, 1/STB 10/163, J. van Zijl to Landdrost, 6 Aug. 1784.

remained as dangerous in 1779, 1780 and 1781 necessitating continual commandos in these years. In the neighbouring Roggeveld Khoisan resistance was even fiercer and commandos from this district ventured far beyond the Sak River in attempts to extirpate the hostile Khoisan.⁸

By 1784, however, farmers in the Hantam felt themselves to be too threatened by the San to the north to be able to lend assistance to their fellows in the east. The Hantam men had even been obliged to join commandos in the distant Sneeuberg, a task that was deeply resented, given the ever present threat posed by the San closer to home.⁹

The military situation declined dramatically in 1785 with the north-eastern frontier being rolled back by Khoisan attacks. Frightened *trekboers* in the Sneeuberg, Camdeboo, Koup and Roggeveld abandoned their farms whilst in the Hantam the locals refused to go on commando.¹⁰ By 1786 the crisis was as severe in the Hantam as it was elsewhere and on 22 July of that year *Veldwagtmeester* Johannes van Zijl wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch to tender his resignation. The reason he gave was that his health was poor and that his farm was too far removed from the outlying districts where the San were most active. The San, he reported, were continuing with murder and robbery, having recently stolen 148 cattle and some guns from Paul Karsten as well as murdering the cattle drover. He suggested to the authorities that they appoint the intelligent, literate thirty-year old Willem Adriaan Nel as the new *veldwagtmeester*.¹¹

This choice was obviously acceptable to the authorities for W.A. Nel wrote to them later that year, in his capacity as *veldwagtmeester*, and including a petition signed by seventeen others in the district. The gist of this communication was that many of the farmers in the Hantam had been obliged to abandon their farms because of the murder and robbery of the San. Should the situation fail to improve, warned Nel, the Hantam would become as desolate as the Sak River and Kamieskou areas. He urgently requested therefore, that the *veldwagtmeester* of the Olifant and Doorn Rivers send help; he also asked for help from Little Namaqualand, specifically mentioning the many "bastes en hottentotten" of the district as well as the great numbers of them present at the "Groote rivier" (Orange), where they lived as an independent people. If part of these men

8. CA, C655, Dag Register van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1771-1779, 3 Sept. 1776; 5 Aug. 1777; CA, I/STB 10/164, W. Steenkamp to Landdrost, 3 Feb. 1778; Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. III, p.84 note. See also chapter 6 above.

9. CA, I/STB 10/163, Van Zijl to Landdrost, 7 Aug. 1784.

10. CA, I/STB 10/163, Memoranda from Resolution of the Krygsraad of Stellenbosch, 19 April 1785 and 6 Sept. 1785. See also chapter 6 above.

11. CA, I/STB 10/162, J. Van Zijl to Landdrost, 22 July 1786.

could be made to go on commando once a year then the San could be dealt with to the great benefit of farmers, not only in the Hantam, but in the Bokkeveld and the entire Roggeveld. This would give the colonists more space to expand and be to the Company's ultimate advantage.¹²

On the evidence of the details contained in the letters which have been quoted above there was clearly an economic, military and environmental crisis in the Hantam by 1786. There was a decrease in environmental resources such as water and grazing, and less land was available for white, Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" *trekboers* for, as their numbers grew, the control of the wealthier farmers over loan-farms was increasing. At the same time the escalating attacks of the San were preventing *trekboer* expansion throughout the frontier and, indeed, causing the retreat and abandonment of many previously occupied areas. The constant and irksome duties of being on commando were also causing hardship and discontent amongst a number of frontiersmen. One of the consequences of this general crisis was the departure of many "Bastaards" and Khoi to the Orange River. But they were not the only ones to be tempted by the verdant banks of the river.

Though the first loan-farm at the Orange had been registered in 1751, very few European farmers bothered to record their occupancy of sites along the river since these were probably only visited on a seasonal basis. The Company's ability to legitimise grazing rights or enforce payment for loan-farms so far from its power base, was virtually non-existent. In any case, before the 1780s, there were simply not that many *trekboers* who dared to graze their livestock so far to the north. Petrus Pienaar was one such man but references to other *trekboers* at the river were few. Matthias Model, a German *pasganger* and a former servant of Jacobus Bierman, was reported to be farming at "Cammas", barely an hour from the river and only two and a quarter miles from "Sandfontein", Pienaar's *legplaats*. Slightly further to the west, downstream from "Sandfontein", another German, Volkert Schoemacher, had a *legplaats*. We also know that a certain colonist named Barend Vry lived along the river, whilst Pienaar's overseer at "Sandfontein" was yet another German, a deserted sailor called Jan Bloem.¹³ Apart from these semi-permanent colonial

12. CA, 1/STB 10/162, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, undated.

13. Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.301, 305, 364, 371; Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.115. Before Bierman "Cammas" had been registered in the name of Coenraad Hendrik Feijt in 1776. CA, RLR 24, 4 March 1776, p.190. "Cammas" is at the present site of Pella (see Mossop, *Brink*, p.ix). See also CA, RLR 24, 21 Nov. 1776 which states that "Jac Lourens Bierman" registered "Jabiesfontein" at the Klein Pella Rivier "aan het Groot Rivier", (p.214). RLR 25, 22 Oct.1777, p.128; "Cammasfontein" was taken over by "Joh Fred Wijsman" on 29 Sept.1786, RLR 35, p.44. Barend Vry is mentioned by Gordon on 26 Nov.1779 (in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.362). For Jan Bloem, see pp.318-9, 355-56 below.

residents at the river were, increasingly, groups of hunters, who, as will be seen, were not exclusively interested in ivory.

On 13 April Adriaan van Zijl, the *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam, wrote to the governor to request permission to go inland with some volunteers for the purpose of elephant hunting. This request was refused since the governor thought that Van Zijl should not go off hunting at a time when he might be required to lead a commando against San raiders. This was a particularly reasonable assumption because Van Zijl himself, a short while before, had impressed upon the *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch how serious the need was for a commando in his district. For this purpose he had been given powder, shot, horses and provisions. But he did not use them for a commando.¹⁴

On 6 July 1786 Van Zijl set out for the north with two wagons. Ostensibly, his purpose was to attack the San who had stolen Paul Karsten's cattle. The fact that he took along a chest full of beads and knives suggested that at least some bartering was envisaged. With him went two of his sons, Petrus and Andries, as well as a colonist called Jan Wiese, Adriaan's brother-in-law. There were four Khoikhoi servants with them - Klyn Piet Eyland, Piet Namaqua, Andries and Ruyter - as well as four "Bastaard-Hottentots" - Paul, Gert, Stoffel and Gerrit Beer.¹⁵ The latter individual lived with Van Zijl, whereas the other "Bastaard-Hottentots" seem to have been more at home in Namaqualand. According to the 1834 account of Andrew Smith, Paul and Gert were bastard sons of the burgher Willem Engelbrecht of the Kamiesberg by a Khoikhoi woman.¹⁶ The

14. At times it is difficult to state whether there were one or two *veldwagtmeesters* in the Hantam. Some times the *veldwagtmeester* of the Bokkeveld over the Doorn River, i.e. the Onder Bokkeveld, was also described as being in the Hantam. This was the case with Adriaan van Zijl who had farms in both the Bokkeveld and the Hantam. In 1786 both W.A. Nel and Adriaan van Zijl were addressed as *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam. A further confusion is that Adriaan's brother, Johannes van Zijl, had also been *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam and resigned only on 22 July 1786 (to be replaced by Nel). The evidence suggests that even though Adriaan van Zijl had the farm "Akerendam" (site of present Calvinia) at the Hantamsberg; and even though his wife was considered to be in Nel's district, i.e. the Hantam; and even though the authorities referred to him as *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam he was, strictly speaking, a *veldwagtmeester* of "over de Doorn enden Hantam". CA, 1/STB 10/163, A. van Zijl to Landdrost, 7 Oct. 1785; 1/STB 10/162, W. Nel to Landdrost, undated; CA, 1/STB 10/162, J. Van Zijl to Landdrost, 22 July 1786; CA, CJ 429, A. Van Zijl to Governor, 28 April, 1786, pp.70-72; Strauss to A. Van Zijl, 8 Aug.1785, p.77; A. Van Zijl to Hantamers, 15 Dec.1785, p.79; Strauss to Landdrost, 15 Jan.1786, pp.81-83; A. Van Zijl to Strauss, undated, pp.85; Extract from Resolutions of Krygsraad, 6 June 1786, p.87.

15. The details of Van Zijl's expedition to the Orange River have been pieced together from the court proceedings in CA, CJ 429, pp.29-235; CA, CJ 70,71, 72; and CA, C 187. Adriaan was married to Wiese's sister, Sara Johanna. De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, p.1168, 1133.

16. Percival R. Kirby, (ed.), *The Diary of Doctor Andrew Smith, Director of the "Expedition for Exploring Central Africa", 1834-1836*, 2 vols (Cape Town, 1939, 1940) pp.202-4.

party made its way to Great Namaqualand where Van Zijl hired some trek oxen in exchange for beads, knives and other provisions. He then revealed to the Khoikhoi servants that they were not actually going to shoot San, but elephants; in order to supply the Company with ivory. There would, of course, Van Zijl assured them, be enough ivory for everyone. At this, Piet Eyland demurred somewhat, being anxious about leaving his livestock in the Hantam unprotected, but Van Zijl forced him to accompany the rest of them along the river.

Here they spent about one and half months about their business. Andries and a Khoikhoi called Tas were then left to look after the wagons, whilst the rest of the group prepared to go further upstream. The "Bastaard-Hottentots" Paul, Gert and Stoffel did not, however, wish to go any further, fearing that their boss was up to no good. Gert Engelbrecht pretended sickness and the others prayed to be allowed to remain in charge of him. Paul covered Gert up with karosses and got him into a state of perspiration so as to fool van Zijl.¹⁷ The *veldwagtmeester* and his remaining followers then continued up the river without them, shooting hippopotami as they went, and encountering three Khoikhoi kraals in succession. The first two kraals were described as being about three day's journey from the river¹⁸ but the last of these groups was at the river itself. It numbered about 400 people and Van Zijl was to describe them as being called the "Coracoose" or the "Kaalkoppen", i.e. Korana.¹⁹ According to Van Zijl's later evidence they asked him to assist them against a neighbouring group of thieving Khoi, similar to Namaqua, called the Nuncquinqua.

The Nuncquinqua were probably the Namneikwa or Namnykoa people, an Einiqua group who were also known as the "Karosdraers" or "Karoshebbbers".²⁰ When Gordon and Wikar encountered the Nuncquinqua in 1779 they were described as living on the islands above the

17. Ibid.

18. CA, C 187, p.41.

19. CA, CJ 429, pp.55, 156, 157; CA, C 187, p.34. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, p.2, believes that the "Coracoose" were Korana. He explains that according to Kronlein, "the able Nama scholar", the etymology of Korana comes from !gora, meaning (to be) bare. His list of derivatives from that stem includes !gora-tanas, a bald headed person, therefore, Engelbrecht concludes, the Kaalkoppen were Korana. This is undoubtedly true but Engelbrecht does not seem to have realised that, in the account which he consulted (the Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 4 May 1790 - 29 June 1790) i.e. CA, C 187, the "Coracoose" and "Kaalkoppen" were synonymous (he did not consult CA, CJ 429 which might have enlightened him). He treats them as though they were two different groups.

20. See chapter eight, note 62 above. Engelbrecht did not see that the Nuncquinqua of CA, C 187 were the same people as Wikar's Namnykoa (/Nam/neikwa). Mossop, *Wikaar*, p.30; Engelbrecht, "Tribes of Wikar's Journal", p.227. Nienaber confuses the matter by classifying the Namneikwa (as he calls them) as Korana (Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.741-744; 698) whereas Wikar is quite specific that they are Einiqua. Van Zijl described them as "een soort van namaqua hottentots" CA, C 187, p.42.

Augrabies Falls,²¹ although, from the evidence of the court records, they do not seem to have been there in 1786. According to the Van Zijls, after being hired by the "Kaalkoppen", they journeyed a further fifteen days up-river to where a tributary, called "de geel rivier", joined it. There they encountered the Nuncquinqua. This was in all probability the Vaal River,²² and the Nuncquinqua were therefore a long way from their 1786 position. Such a move need not surprise us, for both the Einiqua and the Korana were a highly mobile people and the times were particularly volatile. The "Kaalkoppen" told the Van Zijls that the Nuncquinqua had stolen their cattle. Whether or not this was true, the two groups were at war with each other (just as the Nuncquinqua had been at war with the Gyziqua in 1779) and the Nuncquinqua might have been evicted from the Augrabies area by their enemies. On the other hand they might simply have been trying to avoid the "Kaalkoppen" by putting a considerable distance between them. Unfortunately they had not bargained on the visit from the Van Zijls.

Adriaan van Zijl was later to argue that he had gone to the Nuncquinquas out of fear of the "Kaalkoppen". He added, however, that they had told him that amongst the Nuncquinqua's cattle were some which the San had stolen from the colonists and passed on to the Einiqua.²³ Adriaan's son Petrus, who was at the time a boy of fourteen, was told by the "Kaalkoppen" that the Nuncquinqua were also known as "hounsakkes" (or "hounsakken") and that in Dutch their name meant "Christemense bosjesmans".²⁴ Although this latter term was probably no more than an insult, "housakken" may provide further clues to the Nuncquinqua's identity.²⁵ The "Kaalkoppen", for their part, were likely to have been the Keilorana or Great Korana. This conclusion is based on Smith's 1834 information that it was a Taaibosch chief who urged the Van Zijls to attack the Nuncquinqua.²⁶

21. See chapter eight, note 62 above.

22. The Khoikhoi name for the Vaal River was Heigariiep. As Burchell explains in his book *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, 2 vols (London, 1822-1834; reprint London 1953) p.272: "The name Gariep, is applied only to that part of the river below the confluence; while the branch which begins at the place where we were now stationed, is called the Tky-gariep or Ky-gariep, by the natives, and the Vaal River by the Klaarwater Hottentots; which in English may here be rendered by Yellow River." See Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica A***. See also Mossop, *Brink*, p.54-55, n.49.

23. CA, CJ 429 pp.156, 160, 209.

24. CA, CJ 429 pp.174, 184, 56.

25. "Houwsakken" may have some connection with either; a) a subsection of the "Kaross wearers", the names of which were Ansakua or !Ansakwa (Korana for "preparers of skins"; Nienaber, *Stamname*, p.698); or b) "The //Ho:-//?eikwa or Sak (Bag) people. About them nothing further is known". Engelbrecht, *Korana*, p.41.

26. Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, Vol. 1, p.203.

It was about eight in the morning when the Van Zijl party approached the Nuncquinqua kraal. The Khoikhoi were on the south side of the river so the colonists, who were on the northern bank, crossed over. Hurriedly the Nuncquinqua began to drive their cattle onto an island, fearful of the approach of armed and mounted strangers. Without saying a word the Europeans jumped from their horses and opened fire. Their horrified servants, Klyn Piet Eyland, Piet Namaqua, Andries Ruyter and Gerrit Beer, stood by until Adriaan van Zijl turned on them with his musket, beating them with the stock and shouting "Verdoemde Goed naarm schiet juluij niet? Set jij niet dat ik schiet en als jij lieden niet scheid, dan sal jij heij van de sche sop krijen".²⁷

Thus threatened the Khoikhoi servants fired over the heads of the Nuncquinqua whilst the bullets of the Van Zijls and Wiese found human targets. The Nuncquinqua offered no resistance but dragged their dead and wounded into the bushes. Then Van Zijl ordered the shooting to stop and instructed his servants to cross the river and round up the Nuncquinqua's cattle. Because the shooting had frightened the cattle they could only bring 262 across the river.²⁸ They found eight dead Nuncquinqua but a surviving woman told them that there were yet more killed and wounded. Two women and two children flung themselves into the river in fear as the aggressors approached. The woman who had remained asked the Khoikhoi servants if it was customary for the Dutch to kill people in such a murderous fashion. They could only reply that not all the Dutch did so, but that Van Zijl was a violent man. When Piet Eyland remonstrated with Van Zijl, saying that many Khoikhoi had been killed he replied: "Het is voor my even so goed als of ik een blad van een boom trek en de Heeren vraagen niet een na een Hottentot".²⁹

After spending the night at the scene of the slaughter, the Hantamers returned to the "Kaalkoppen", giving them beads and tobacco, but no cattle. Returning the way that they had come they discovered the "Bastaard-Hottentots", Stoffel, Paul and Gerrit, staying at the second Khoikhoi kraal they had passed on their way from Namaqualand.³⁰ According to Petrus van Zijl, these were the "Linkse".³¹ This is a further valuable clue to the disposition of Khoikhoi groups

27. "Damned things why aren't you shooting? Can't you see that I'm shooting and if you don't shoot you'll get the same treatment". CA, C 187, p.43.

28. CA, C 187, p.44. A. Smith reports that 1 200 cattle were stolen. Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, Vol. 1, p.203.

29. "To me it's like pulling a leaf from a tree and "de Heeren" [from the context probably the government] couldn't care less about a Hottentot." CA, C 187, p.45.

30. This "Namaqualand" was actually Great Namaqualand for when Van Zijl was asked whether he'd gone to Namaqualand he replied: "Dat daar geen Namaqualand wis maar wel over de groote rivier gegaante zeijn". Later he elaborated: "Ja over de groote rivier in segt dat die Streek sig noemt Anniquas, synde de bastaard hottentotten die daar van tyd tot tyd na toe trekken". CA, CJ 429, pp.150, 155.

31. CA, CJ 429, pp.174, 184.

along the Orange in 1786, for the Links were a Korana group whose Khoikhoi name was //?Arema-//?eis or the Karemankies.³² According to Engelbrecht they, along with the Kei!orana (or Taaibosch), had been in the vanguard of the main group of Korana which left the Cape and arrived at the Orange River in the middle of the eighteenth century.³³ When Gordon first heard of them in 1779 their name was connected with the Toupkwa (or Hartenaars) and both groups were reported to be in the vicinity of the confluence of the Vaal and Harts rivers.³⁴ Just like the Kei!orana ("Kaalkoppen" or Taaibosch) they seem to have moved a long way downstream by 1786 before returning to the east and north after this date. Proof for this assertion is to be found in an observation of Andrew Smith in 1834:

our Coranna guide ... an aged man who had spent his younger days in the territory of a Coranna tribe... It appeared from his account, which we had no reason to doubt, that the Arminize (author's note: i.e. the Karemankies or Links) (of which tribe he was by birth a member) previous to the last 42 years occupied a district immediately to the east of Pella, on the Orange River. About the year 1792, John Bloom, the colonist, arrived in the country... He ... plundered the Bituana tribes, who were then residing in the direction of Latacoo... The result was to excite great consternation ... causing them to retire inland... Of this retrocession the Corannas availed themselves, and by degrees, advanced towards the situations thus left unoccupied.³⁵

Here again is evidence that, between 1779 and 1786, Korana groups had taken occupation of parts of the river which had been the site of Einiqua kraals when Wikar and Gordon travelled the area. They no doubt contributed immensely to the rapid destabilisation of Einiqua societies, but in this, as the Van Zijl expedition illustrates, they were not alone. Nor were they immune to disruption themselves, for Van Zijl's next move was to order his servants to attack the "Linkse". He was no doubt as keen to incriminate the "Bastaard-Hottentots" who had not been involved in the attack on the Nuncquinqua (in order to seal their lips) as he was to acquire more cattle. He therefore commanded his servants to accompany Stoffel, Paul and Gerrit in an attack to take all the cattle and kill all of the Khoikhoi. When Paul objected to these orders Van Zijl shouted that all the "hottentots" in that part of the world were "schelms" and that if he did not do as he was told he would get the same treatment. The reluctant servants therefore carried out the attack but must have done so rather half-heartedly for they succeeded in capturing a mere fifteen cattle.³⁶

32. Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.31-47.

33. Ibid.

34. Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.584-5; 878, 697.

35. W.F Lye, (ed.), *Andrew Smith: Journal of his expedition into the interior of South Africa 1834-1836* (Cape Town, 1975), p.128.

36. CA, C 187, pp.46-48.

Although the Van Zijls were unlikely to have been the first colonial party to have left its mark on the riverine societies, they do seem to have inaugurated a chain reaction of violence which lasted for decades and which was, as Andrew Smith noted, closely linked with the name of Jan Bloem. In fact the paths of the Van Zijls and Bloem crossed each other on this very occasion.

Since the "Linkse" had all fled, the disgusted Van Zijl had no option but to return to the colony. He, his companions, their servants and a large herd of stolen cattle therefore trekked westwards, along the river, until they reached Andries and the wagons. Soon afterwards they approached the farm of Petrus Pienaar called "Hartebeesterivier", situated at the Orange River and under the management of Jan Bloem.³⁷ This farm was, no doubt, at the junction of the Hartebeest and Orange rivers. The Hartebeest River is in effect the continuation of the Sak River further to the south, for that river disappears into the sand north of the present day Brandvlei and re-emerges as the Hartebeest, around present day Kenhardt. Although it sometimes dries up completely, the Hartebeest river is the most likely place to find water in Bushmanland and it was therefore, the best route between the Orange and the southern interior. The Van Zijls were probably therefore about to cross Bushmanland by following the Hartebeest southwards first, however, they camped for the night near Pienaar's farm.

Next morning a number of the cattle were missing and Van Zijl's response was to thrash the Khoikhoi drovers with such severity that over a year later they still bore the scars. Wiese then mounted his horse and followed behind Ruiter and Tas as, bleeding and beaten, the two came to Jan Bloem's kraal, the place where the cattle spoor led. Before proceeding any further Adriaan van Zijl was summoned to lend his authority to the delicate negotiations which were about to ensue.³⁸

Bloem had first arrived in the northern frontier zone as a fugitive from justice. He was, apparently, a German from Thuringia who had deserted from a ship in Cape Town in 1780. At some stage he must have acquired a wife for it was reported that he had murdered her and fled to the Orange River. Here he was employed by Petrus Pienaar of the Hantam to advance his not always legitimate interests. Though Bloem had not, in 1786, attained the notoriety which he was to acquire at a later date, he was no doubt, quietly consolidating his position along the river at the time of the Van Zijls' visit. He was, eventually, to have between ten and twelve wives, who

37. CA, CJ 429, Relas van Hottentot Andries, pp.119-127.

38. CA, CJ 429, pp.119-121.

included Korana women of the Kats and Springbok clans.³⁹ The chances are that he was already a fairly influential force in the district and, perceiving that the Van Zijls had a lot of dubiously acquired cattle, did not scruple to help himself to some of them.

Van Zijl and Wiese were not, however, to be trifled with. Dismounting from their horses, but retaining their muskets, they approached the German in a confrontational mood. Wiese asked Bloem where their cattle were and Bloem replied in words which are typical of his character. Since they are the only recorded words he ever uttered they have a brutal poignancy fitting, almost, to be his epitaph: "Bin ik jou beestewagter? - Am I your cattle's keeper?"

This answer was not appreciated by Wiese who knocked Bloem unconscious, leaving his body lying senseless on the veld whilst the Van Zijl gang rounded up their missing cattle and rode off.⁴⁰

The journey back to the Hantam was uneventful. It was November by the time the Van Zijls returned to their home base and their greatest concern was now to conceal their crimes. The Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentot" servants were threatened with death if they so much as uttered a word about the expedition. The cattle were divided between Van Zijl, his sons and Wiese, but there was nothing for the servants. Petrus van Zijl did not completely trust Piet Eyland for he complained to his father that "de hottentot sal ons in 't verdriet bringen zoo als hy Engelbrecht in 't verdriet gebragt heeft". Quite what this previous betrayal had been is not known but Adriaan van Zijl thought it prudent to offer Piet Eyland three cattle to keep him quiet. Eyland refused.⁴¹

It was hard enough, even without the threat of informers, to hide the evidence of the expedition from neighbouring farmers for there were at least 260 new cattle in the district. Wiese quickly sold some of his share of 80 cattle to Paul Karstens and one cow to Christiaan Bok. Van Zijl, realising that it was common knowledge that his followers had returned with cattle, decided to "confess" to the *landdrost* that he had, in fact, made a journey to barter or buy some oxen. He had, however, (or so he claimed) managed to get a mere six or eight cattle from the "Coracoose" in exchange for attempting to help them against a group of thieving Khoi. These robbers,

39. Legassick, "Northern Frontier", p.369; "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana, and the missionaries", pp.133-37, 251.

40. CA, CJ 429, pp. 205, 119-121.

41. "The hottentot is going to cause us trouble, just like he did to Engelbrecht". CA, CJ 429, p.174; CA, C 187, p.49-50.

according to Van Zijl, had fled into the caves and kloofs of the mountains so that he had not been able to attack them.⁴²

Unfortunately, this story did not tally with that of Sebastiaan Valentyn van Reenen. He complained that Van Zijl had brought 280 cattle to the Hantam from the land of the Great Namaqua and that these cattle, moreover, were straying onto his land and eating the grass.⁴³ Even more alarming was the evidence of David Frederick Straus of the Hantam who, in 1787, was visited by the aggrieved Jan Bloem. Bloem reported that a group of about 400 "Namaqua" had been on their way to attack Van Zijl. They had only been dissuaded from this course of action when Bloem had told them that Van Zijl lived too far inland to be easily reached, and that many farms and farmers lay between him and the Orange River.⁴⁴

Obviously these "Namaqua" were Van Zijl's victims seeking their revenge. With the evidence against Van Zijl mounting up, the *landdrost* decided to begin a rigorous enquiry into the incident and for this purpose summoned the Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentot" servants to give evidence before him. Piet Eyland, Paul and Gert Engelbrecht, Andries and Ruyter eventually testified between October and November 1787. It took them considerable courage to do so since they feared not only Van Zijl, but the Dutch in general. Since he was a close relative of Adriaan van Zijl, *Veldwagmeester* Willem Adriaan Nel had, in fact, done his best to obstruct proceedings by preventing Gerrit Beer from going to give evidence. Instead, Beer, along with others who had not been included, fled for his life to Namaqualand. Andries and Ruyter had been similarly hampered and harassed by Wiese and Van Zijl, but had eventually run away to Stellenbosch where they threw themselves on the mercy of the *landdrost*. They begged that they would never have to return to "die Kant van 't land" and expressed themselves willing to work for the rest of their lives in Stellenbosch for food alone.⁴⁵

By 6 November the *landdrost* had heard enough to order the arrest of the Van Zijls and Wiese. On 7 February 1788 their imprisonment was confirmed and, later that month, they were cross-examined.⁴⁶ There was, however, one absentee: Andries. It was his youth that spared him for he was even younger than his brother Petrus. When Andrew Smith heard the story in 1834 it was

42. CA, C 187, pp.34; CA, CA, CJ 429, p.35.

43. CA, C 187, pp. 35-36; CA, CJ.429, p.36.

44. CA, C 187, pp.53-54.

45. CA, C 187 p.37; CA, CJ 429, pp.124, 38-39.

46. CA, CJ 429, pp.50-52.

stated that: "Petrus, in consequence of being married was considered from under the control of his father... Andries, not being married, was regarded as being subject to obey the orders of his father and was dismissed". There is a slight anomaly here because, according to De Villiers and Pama, Petrus only married in November 1787, i.e. after his return from the Orange River. The same source states that Petrus was christened in 1767. This would mean that he was at least nineteen in 1786 and not fourteen, as he claimed in court. In any event he was considered to be responsible for his actions whereas Andries was not. Andries was however expected to appear in court but he refused to obey the *landdrost's* summons.⁴⁷

The authorities were, in fact, more interested in cross-examining another of Van Zijl's sons, Willem, for once the Khoikhoi began to testify, evidence of another barbarous atrocity came to light. According to Andries, Willem had murdered his (Andries') daughter Antje by stringing her up from a tree, flogging her with a *sjambok*, shooting her twice in the head and then finishing her off by smashing her with stones.⁴⁸ A summons was duly sent to Willem van Zijl but neither he nor his brother Andries deemed it wise to join Petrus, Wiese and their father in prison for developments at the trial were far from encouraging.⁴⁹

Adriaan's defence was that he had gone northwards in order to look for farms for his sons. He had been forced into helping the "Kaalkoppen" in what was, in any case, a legitimate raid since the Nuncquinqua were receivers of cattle stolen by the San from the colonists. It was the Nuncquinqua who had fired on them first with bows and arrows so they had been forced to retaliate. Petrus pleaded that he had been ordered to do what he had done by his father whilst Wiese followed Adriaan van Zijl's story. He added, however, that he did not think there was anything wrong in shooting "Bosjesmans Hottentotten" or in taking their cattle.⁵⁰

Sentence was passed on 27 March 1788. Adriaan van Zijl and Jan Wiese were to be banished from the colony to the Fatherland whilst Petrus was to spend two years on Robben Island. These sentences were nowhere near as severe as the original judgement: that the two adults should be executed and Petrus condemned to twenty-five years on the island.⁵¹ Mild though the final sentences were there is reason to doubt that the banishments were indefinite for how else does one

47. Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, Vol. 1, p.204; De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, pp.1168-1169.

48. CA, CJ 429, pp.122-125, 189-90.

49. CA, CJ 70, pp.26 and 101; CA, CJ 70, pp.126-7.

50. CA, CJ 429, pp.147-209.

51. CA, C 187, pp.71-73; CA, CJ 70, pp.37-39.

account for the fact that Wiese and his wife begat seven children in the colony between 1791 and 1804?⁵² Petrus, at least, served his sentence on Robben Island.⁵³ In his absence, however, his younger brother, Andries, seduced his wife, Margaretha Johanna van Schalkwyk (to whom he had been married for a mere three months) and continued to roam the Hantam in freedom along with his fugitive brother Willem.⁵⁴ The Council of Justice also ordered that Willem Adriaan Nel should confiscate 160 cattle from Wiese and Van Zijl's herds and bring them to the Company at the Cape. This task however proved to be impossible because the condemned men had had the foresight to disperse their herds amongst those of friends and relatives before going to trial. Their wives pleaded poverty and hardship, taking care to keep their remaining livestock out of the clutches of the authorities, whilst *Veldwagmeester* Nel was happily most ineffectual in implementing his instructions.⁵⁵

In many ways the Van Zijl expedition of 1786 is a most revealing episode, particularly if one compares it to the attack made by Picketburgers on the Great Namaqua in 1738. In both cases a group of colonists engaged in illegal elephant hunting and cattle bartering decided to take advantage of the vulnerability of the Khoikhoi societies of the Orange River and attack them. In neither of these incidents of unprovoked violence did the Khoikhoi victims receive protection or compensation; nor were the guilty parties punished at all severely. In both incidents Khoisan or "Bastaard-Hottentot" servants had played major, if unwilling roles in the murderous robbery, without however, receiving much for their pains. In 1738 the aggrieved servants had triggered off a major frontier war as they sought compensation for their troubles, but in 1786 the situation was different. The coercive power of frontier farmers over their servants now seemed to be much greater, and options for resistance were correspondingly less. Indeed, it is difficult to judge whether the Van Zijl's servants or the Nuncquinqua were most in need of colonial protection. In both 1738 and 1786 the government's ability to impose its will on the frontier zone was limited

52. De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, p.1133. Adriaan, described as old and lame, was back in the Hantam in 1790. See CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Comas van Mozambique, 19 July 1790; Relas van Lea, 19 July 1790.

53. CA, CJ 3189, p.277. Petrus van Zijl imprisoned April 1788, released 18 March 1790.

54. Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, Vol. 1, p.204; De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, p.1169. Willem was eventually banished in absentia. On 6 Feb.1790 he and Andries wrote to Thenius, the president of the Council of Justice, to ask for pardon. Willem claimed that he had shot Antje one night when it was dark and on hearing a suspicious noise in the kraal. He was too young, he argued, to be held accountable for his actions. His case was discussed in January 1793 and he was released from banishment. Andries also pleaded his youth as a mitigating factor and was, presumably, pardoned before 1793. He married Petrus' wife and sired seven children. CA, CJ 70, pp.215-6; CA, CJ 72, pp.359-63; CA, CJ 74, pp.412-415; CA, CJ 75, pp.8-11, 18-19. He was a drunken witness to the murder of Christina Nel by her drunken husband, Albert, in the Hantam in 1789, see CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Comas van Mozambique, 19 July 1790.

55. CA, CJ 70, pp.28-31, 50; CA, CJ 71, pp.143-145, 198-200, 251-255; CA, CJ 429, pp.122-124.

although, to its credit, attempts were made to investigate complaints of unbridled violence against innocent Khoikhoi. It cannot, however, be said that the punishment meted out to the Van Zijls acted as a deterrent. Indeed, far from signalling the fact that murderous conduct would not be tolerated, their expedition heralded the arrival of a new, intensive era of disruption for the Khoisan societies of the Orange River.

"SCHELMEN, KANALJIES EN DROSTERS"⁵⁶

The Van Zijl expedition had demonstrated that, by 1786, groups of colonists were able to terrorise the Khoisan societies of the Orange River almost at will and, at the same time, control their own servants closer to home. The floodgates of colonial violence had thus opened to the Orange and it seemed as if white settlement would now swamp the banks of the river. This did not happen. The number of whites visiting the river certainly increased after 1786 but, significantly, so too did the number of Khoisan or "Bastaard-Hottentots" from the colony. We have already seen that there were appreciable numbers of these people at the Orange before 1786 for the *veldwagtmeesters* of the northern frontier had begun to express their disquiet about their presence there as early as the 1770s.⁵⁷ Some of these Khoisan or "Bastaard-Hottentots", following earlier precedent, had doubtless arrived at the river as obedient henchmen, doing the dirty work of hunting, trading and raiding for their white masters. Other, increasingly, found their own way to the river and formed themselves into independent groups. These Oorlams, as they became known, were, in the eyes of the colonists, nothing more than *drosters*. Many indeed were fleeing from oppression and exploitation in the colony for, as the Van Zijl case had but recently reiterated, the lot of Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentot" servants within the northern frontier zone was not a happy one. Flight, or strict compliance with the commands of their masters, seemed the only options. The prospect of joining the cattleless Khoisan resisters of the arid interior of Bushmanland cannot have been attractive to those whose lives centred on livestock. In these circumstances the best alternative to a life of servitude, provided one was prepared to contest for resources with the resident Khoisan, was to live the life of an independent pastoralist along the Orange River.

56. "Rogues, Rabble and Deserters": the words of Landdrost Bletterman when moved to describe certain colonists living north of the Orange River. See p.334 below.

57. See p.290 above.

In time, these Oorlam groups would become strong enough to deter all but the most hardy *trekboers* from establishing themselves at the river, and the result was that the frontier of colonial settlement remained much where it was. In its stead there developed a zone of violence and insecurity where raiding and robbery became institutionalised and the commando system was adapted to meet the needs of non-productive, predatory and parasitic societies who preyed off each other and their weaker neighbours. This was, of course, what many *trekboers*, Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots" had been doing on a small scale before 1786 but after this date the volume of traffic to and from the river became positively alarming.

In 1788 some of the white inhabitants of the Bokkeveld complained about what was obviously an increasingly common occurrence. Groups of Khoikhoi were trekking to and from the Orange River with herds and flocks of livestock, doubtless in search of good grazing and water, but in such a way as to threaten the security of the colonial farmers. In the first place, though some of the Khoikhoi were acting as shepherds or drovers for white masters, the fact that they were provided with firearms was seen, by certain upholders of the law, as being dangerous. In September 1788, Willem Adriaan Nel the *veldwagtmeester* of the Bokkeveld, complained that a group of Khoikhoi, in the service of Philip Snyman, had been returning from the Great River with some cattle and a gun when, close to the Hantam they had been attacked by San and robbed of both livestock and the firearm. The very next day, according to Nel, the San attacked his servants and shot at them with a gun. Nel's conclusion was that Khoikhoi should not be permitted to wander about with firearms, since inevitably, the weapons ended up in the wrong hands.⁵⁸

Another (and more overt) threat posed by groups of Khoikhoi travelling backwards and forwards from Namaqualand was that they often swept up livestock that did not belong to them as they trekked northwards. This, at least, was the view of *Veldwagtmeester* Petrus Lodewicus Theron and twelve other men from the Bokkeveld. They wrote that those Khoikhoi from the Bokkeveld who journeyed to Namaqualand did not themselves have much livestock but that on their way there they stole large amounts of cattle from the colonists. Theron suggested that those Khoikhoi who lived in Namaqualand should stay there while those who did not should be prohibited from roving about and obliged to work in the service of the colonists.⁵⁹

58. CA, 1/STB 10/162, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 30 Sept. 1788. The year before Nel had reported that robberies were still taking place in the district and that he had shot dead "vier hottentots rovers", CA, 1/STB 10/167, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 20 Sept. 1787.

59. CA, 1/STB 10/162, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 11 Oct. 1789.

In the meantime incessant attacks by the Khoisan on the *trekboers* of the Hantam district continued. Willem Adriaan Nel reported on 11 October 1789 that he had led a commando which had killed or captured twenty-four San,⁶⁰ but several of the farmers did not consider this to be an adequate response. Petrus Pienaar emerged as the spokesman of the dissatisfied Hantamers. Since he was to play an important role along the Orange River and the northern Cape frontier zone it will be necessary to provide some details about him.

From an early date the life of Petrus Pienaar was closely linked to both the Afrikaner Oorlams and the Orange River. Pienaar, who was born in 1750, farmed in the vicinity of the Tulbagh district in the 1770s, during which period Klaas Afrikaner and his family entered his service as herders. It is likely that some time before 1779 Pienaar and the Afrikaners - Klaas and his sons Jager and Titus - had visited the Orange River, either as hunters, or in search of grazing for their stock. According to the missionary Campbell, Pienaar had, at some stage, had a farm at the Olifants River.⁶¹ But like other frontier farmers he realised that seasonal migrations to the Orange River were a feasibility and, with the remote vastness of the northern districts to wander in, was not overly punctilious about registering loan-farms. By 1779, when Pienaar (together with Sebastiaan and Paul van Reenen) attached himself to Gordon and Paterson's expedition to the Orange River mouth, he was obviously regarded as being one of the best guides to the river. Significantly, at this stage he was described as being "a burgher of the Rodesand", which implies that he had not made his permanent residence too far to the north. He did, however, possess a *legplaats* called "Sandfontein" which was nine kilometres west of Klein Pella and about fifteen kilometres from the south bank of the river.⁶² On Gordon's expedition to the Orange River, Pienaar and his Khoikhoi companions acted as the party's hunters. One incident that reveals that Pienaar was capable of great physical endurance occurred when he and his men went off ahead to hunt on 11 August 1779. They rejoined the main party on 18 August after having had a period of three and half days without water. The group looked "dreadfully ill, having travelled through sultry deserts (sic) over sandy hills and rocky mountains without tasting food or swallowing a drop of water". Pienaar, however, appeared to Paterson to be "much less injured by his

60. CA, 1/STB 10/162, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 11 Oct. 1789.

61. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (London, 1815; reprint Cape Town) p.376; Du Bruyn, "Oorlams", p.3; E. Bradlow, "Petrus Pienaar-Ruffian or Courageous Pioneer", *Quarterly Bulletin of the S A Library*, Vol. 3, 1980, pp.94-99; De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, p.692. See also chapter 7 above.

62. Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, pp.241, 298. Pienaar had also registered the farm "Elands Drift" at the Doorn River on 15 April 1779, CA, RLR 26, p.58.

unfortunate expedition than the Hottentots".⁶³ That these "Hottentots" probably included people such as the Afrikaners is suggested by an entry in Gordon's journal made over three months later: "I found Pinar and his Hottentots still at Sandfontein... Some of Pinar's Hottentots were ill from the hard walking in the heat... At the request of our best shot, Afrikaander, I gave him some medicine since he wants to accompany me to Namaqualand".⁶⁴ Other interesting associates of Petrus Pienaar who were described as being resident at "Sandfontein" in 1779 were the Barends (or Bastart or Baster) brothers, Claas and Piet. Claas, like Afrikaander (probably Klaas Afrikaner) was also a good shot and it is remarkable how these accomplished hunters gravitated towards Pienaar.⁶⁵

Little is known of Pienaar's activities in the 1780s, though it is probable that he used his farm "Elands Drift" at the Doorn river as a base for trips to the Orange River. No doubt the Afrikaners and the Barends continued to act as his herders or hunters in a mutually advantageous relationship. They could look after his livestock and supply him with ivory whilst building up flocks and herds of their own. Pienaar could, on the other hand, supply them with guns, powder, shot and other useful commodities. When Francois le Vaillant travelled to the north in 1783, the two men met each other. Despite the fact that Pienaar had the reputation of being a brave and renowned hunter, Le Vaillant declined to accept his services as a guide, instead, he left a rather unflattering description of the frontiersman, characterising him as a drunken nuisance. It is clear from Le Vaillant's (albeit not always reliable) testimony that Pienaar was not above a bit of active trading himself, for whilst ostensibly on a hunting trip, he had a wagon load of brandy, trinkets and tobacco for bartering.⁶⁶ When Gordon met Pienaar again, in 1785 in the vicinity of

63. W. Paterson, *A Narrative of Four Journeys into the Country of the Hottentots and Caffraria* (London, 1790) pp.113-114; Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.268. If the Pienaar mentioned in Gordon's 1785 journal is the same Petrus Pienaar he seems to have lost his ability to endure thirst (Gordon, 22 Nov. 1785, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.390). "Pienaar wanted to take us along a different route from the ordinary one (N.B. this ravine is called 'De Hel'), the better to reach the top of an abrupt peak which seemed to be the highest in the Rodesand, but we got lost over and in some very difficult ravines, so that Pienaar and Meyer (who drank water at each brook) were completely exhausted by perspiring so heavily on their arduous walk and Pienaar remained lying at a brook and afterwards returned home".

64. Gordon, 27 Nov. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.362.

65. Gordon, 28 Sept. and 8 Oct. 1779, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, pp.300, 310. See also note 61.

66. F. Le Vaillant, *New Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa in the Years 1783-1785* (London, 1796) Vol. 1, pp.147-8; Vol. II, pp.68-73, 216-224; Vol. III, pp.369-370. See also J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboek* (Cape Town, 1938) pp.229-233. An amusing note to Le Vaillant's travels is found in a loose page in the manuscript of Gordon's fourth journey. Gordon was told by Pienaar and by Claas Bastert (both of whom accompanied Le Vaillant) that it was Barend Vrij who shot the giraffe which Le Vaillant claimed to have shot. In fact Le Vaillant took Vrij's horse for a giraffe, stalked it and very nearly shot it by mistake. Gordon Journals, translation and manuscript of Patrick Cullinan.

the Winterhoek, he reported that Pienaar had just returned from a journey to the Koebieskou, or Kubiskou, a range of hills north-west of the Hantam.⁶⁷ It is also known that Jan Bloem was acting as overseer on one of Pienaar's *legplaatsen* on the Hartebeest River in 1786. Quite clearly, therefore, Pienaar's activities were both diverse and extensive.

It is hardly surprising that by 1790 he was one of the most influential men on the northern frontier. In March of that year he registered three new farms in his name - "de Groote Vlakte over de Oliphants Rivier"; "de Houwhoek aan de Hantams River"; "de Vaderlandse Riet Valley over de Oliphants en Doorn River"⁶⁸ - and obviously felt strong enough to challenge the authority of the local *veldwagtmeester*, Willem Adriaan Nel.

In June 1790 Pienaar wrote a letter to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, outlining the current crisis in the Hantam and suggesting measures which should be taken in order to rectify the situation.⁶⁹ Its contents are an important, detailed depiction of the situation in the Hantam in 1790 and are worthy of consideration. According to Pienaar the San had made ten attacks on Hantam farms since December, driving off livestock, murdering Khoi shepherds and stealing guns. The *veldwagtmeester*, Willem Adriaan Nel, had undertaken four commandos but all to no avail and with negligible results. Only the week before Nel had been off on a commando in the veld whilst the San were busy attacking three Hantam households, firing on the inhabitants with four guns.

On another occasion just as Nel had returned home, the San had launched a raid on the Hantam mountain, taking Johannes Gous's cattle and Steenkamp's sheep. Those who attempted to follow were obliged to retire once the San began to fire at them - with bullets. Part of the problem, according to Pienaar, was that *Veldwagtmeester* Nel and *Veldkorporaal* Karstens had abandoned their farms in the Hantam - because of the San - and based themselves in the Bokkeveld. From this position it took between ten and twelve days to mobilise a commando and arrive in the Hantam. But unless a commando could pursue robbers within two days of a raid, all was lost. The reluctance of men to go on commando did not help matters but prompt attendance was not likely to occur if one first had to go to the Bokkeveld in order to alert the *veldwagtmeester*. As it was, fourteen farms had been deserted because of the San.

67. Gordon, 22 Nov. 1785, in Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.390.

68. CA, RLR 36, pp.191, 192, 193.

69. CA, 1/STB 10/162, P. Pienaar to Landdrost, 3 June 1790.

Pienaar's suggestions were that firearms and ammunition should be more liberally provisioned than they had been, firstly to the *veldwagtmeester* but secondly, and more importantly, to the outlying farmers. In addition, the farmers from districts far removed from the dangers of San attack should be compelled to undertake a commando at least once a year. These men should include the many "basters so gedoopte als ongedoopte" who lived along the Olifants River and in the "Koude of Seder gebergte". The "groote rivier" was also "opgepropt van basjtaars en oorlanse Hottentotte" who would, if Pienaar was in charge, be sent on commando. In this way the Kareeberge and the country to the east of the Sak and Vis Rivers in Bushmanland could once more be inhabited by colonists. Pienaar concluded his letter by boasting that "ik heeft honderde van bosjemans helpe verslaan" and that this was accomplished in ways quite different to the "regte kinder werk en spele" which characterised the present attempts to defeat the San in the Hantam. In this way, whilst not exactly accusing Nel of incompetence, Pienaar was hinting to the authorities that if they gave him the tools, he, Pienaar, could finish the job.⁷⁰

That Nel was not unaware of this challenge to his authority and Pienaar's criticism of his leadership may be gathered from a letter he wrote to the *landdrost* on 23 July 1790. In this he reported on a series of raids by San, armed with guns, on Coert Ryk's livestock. Nel was only able to raise four men to join him on commando and they had so little powder and shot that it was not prudent to follow the robbers into the mountains. No sooner had this unsuccessful sortie returned than the cattle of Johannes Gous were driven off. This time only one man answered the summons to commando duty and the San, left unpunished, returned to drive away Johannes Karsten's sheep, firing guns at the people within his farm house. Nel could only suppose that the refusal of the colonists to undertake commandos stemmed from their perception that they remained unpunished since the *landdrost* and *Krygsraad* did nothing to enforce their authority. Without the backing of this authority a *veldwagtmeester's* ability to command was non-existent. Nel, like Pienaar, stressed the need for lavish supplies of powder and shot. He hoped that the authorities would send 200 pounds of the former and 400 pounds of the latter with his *veldkorporaal*, Karsten, so that a commando could be assembled before the end of August. Also, as Pienaar had suggested, Nel asked the authorities to command the *veldwagtmeester* of the Bidouw to bring out the "bastaards en Hottentotte" of the "Kouwe Bergen" on commando.⁷¹

70. Ibid.

71. CA, I/STB 10/162; W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 23 July 1790.

It is not known whether Nel's proposed commando actually took place in August 1790, although there was a great deal of commando activity in the Roggeveld at this time.⁷² But in October and November of that year disturbing information began to reach the *landdrost* at Stellenbosch about events in Great Namaqualand and in other regions across the Orange River. These events, which dated back to about 1786 (the year of the Van Zijl expedition) were to suggest to the authorities that Pienaar's offer of assistance could not be ignored.

On 5 October 1790 Augustus van den Heever, the *veldkorporaal* of Little Namaqualand, reported that about three or four years previously, a group of colonists had trekked over, "den grote rivier synde de grenschijding tuschen de Christernin en Namaqua Hottentotten".⁷³ These colonists, who included the burgers Matthias Esterhuysen, Pieter Besuydenhout, Isaac Bosman the younger, Guiliam Visagie, David Vry and Johannes Frederik Wietsman, settled in Great Namaqualand, despite the fact that the VOC had not given them loan-farms there and that crossing over the river was forbidden. These men had acquired large quantities of livestock, which they had bartered from the Namaqua, and which they herded along the river and down to the Hantam. This example had been followed by the "Bastaard-Hottentots" of the area who numbered (according to the reports of others) about four hundred strong. Van den Heever himself was prepared to vouch for the fact that there were at least two hundred of them and that they were equipped with guns and ammunition.

Alarmed by this situation, and equipped with governmental authority to confiscate firearms from "Bastaard-Hottentots" who did not have written permission to possess guns, Van den Heever had attempted, in about 1789, to disarm "die Hottentot Claas Bastaart, Adam Kok de klyne, Cornelis Kok" and those of their company who had muskets. Claas Bastaart had responded to this by saying "met de tromp van het snaphaan hom te moeten worden afgenomen want so lange hy van kruijd en lood was voorsien tot den laasten kogel op de christene te sullen [verdeede]".⁷⁴

Such an attitude created great unease among the few white inhabitants of the district whilst information received by Van den Heever - that the kraal of "die Hottentot Taveboer" had been

72. See for instance the *veldwagmeester's* reports for 1790 in CA, 1/STB 10/162.

73. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van J.A. van den Heever, 5 Oct. 1790. It is of considerable interest to note that the colonists of the north-western Cape perceived the Orange River to be the boundary between the Christians (whites) and Namaquas even though the northern boundary of the colony had not yet been proclaimed.

74. Ibid. "To try to take it away with the barrel of a gun because as long as he had powder and lead he'd defend himself against the Christians to the last bullet".

attacked by "bastart Hottentotten" and ten people shot dead - did nothing to calm the situation. Van den Heever was convinced that, unless the authorities took precautionary measures, those who entered loan-farms in Little Namaqualand would follow the example of those who had gone to settle in Great Namaqualand. This would result in the Great Namaqua being driven from their grazing areas across the Orange River and their livestock being acquired by the colonists. The consequences of this would be an outbreak of plundering, robbery and violence similar to the attacks by the San as the Namaqua sought to recover their animals. All of this, concluded Van den Heever, should be seen against the background of the great fear felt by the loan-farming *trekboers* in the face of the presence of ten times as many "bastaars Hottentotten" armed with guns.⁷⁵

This was the view of the *veldkorporaal* of Little Namaqualand. The *landdrost* of Stellenbosch was, however, provided with a different perspective when he received a letter from Cornelius Kok just over a month later. Cornelius obviously felt obliged to defend his right to possess both land and firearms for he explained that he had been living on the *legplaats* of his father, "der Hottentot Captain Adam Kok". This farm, called "Spitskopje", lay over the Orange River and had been given to Adam Kok by the Governor Tulbagh twenty years before. Cornelius had acquired five muskets in order to protect his livestock. Three of these he had bought from colonists (the prices ranged from twenty to thirty Rijksdaalders), one of them he had bartered from "den Hottentot Swart Booij" for two heifers, and the fifth, for which he had paid three oxen, he had acquired from no less a person than the *veldkorporaal* of the Kamiesberg, Johannes Augustus van den Heever! In addition to these firearms his father, Adam Kok, had had two muskets whilst two of Cornelius' brothers, Cupido and Jager, had one apiece. They did not know how many firearms his other brothers - Adam Kok junior and Soloman Kok - had in their possession.⁷⁶

With regards to the events which Van den Heever had described Cornelius stated that, about four years ago, the burghers Barend Vry, Pieter Bezuydenhout, Matthias Esterhuysen and Guillian Visagie had come to settle, sometimes on this side, sometimes on the other side, of the Orange River. With them had been Isaac Bosman the younger, but he had subsequently died on the other side of the river. All of these men had been engaged in bartering livestock. It was remarkable that Bezuydenhout and Esterhuysen had been crossing the river for four years, each time with only enough oxen to pull their three wagons. Each time they returned however, they had huge

75. CA, 1/STB 3/12, 5 Oct. 1790. See also evidence of Johannes Hendrik Beukes, 29 Sept. 1791.

76. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Cornelis Kok, 14 Nov. 1790.

quantities of livestock with them. Jan Bloem was another like them. He had first settled on the south side of the river about seven years before, on the farm of Petrus Pienaar. He then settled for three years on the other side of the river and had come to acquire large amounts of stock. Cornelius Kok was certain that these had been taken from others and that Bloem was in partnership with the Hantam farmer Christiaan Bok and his son Michiel.⁷⁷

In contrast to this behaviour, Cornelius assured the *landdrost* that he, and his father and brothers, had engaged in the peaceful activity of stock raising and had never done anything to harm any of the Khoikhoi groups whatsoever. Instead they had shot elephants, in order to sell the tusks to the Company, and sold their stock to the contracted butchers. Certainly they had never acted like the *ex-veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam, Adriaan van Zijl who, together with his companions, had terrorised the "Coraqua Hottentots". Van Zijl's victims had simply recouped their losses by stealing the cattle of the "Caffers". Indeed, the "naauwangers, Tweelinge en Crostragers" (the Einiqua) had informed Cornelius Kok that they had often seen groups of "bastaart Hottentotten", armed with muskets, trekking to beyond the Spionberg to the "Caffers". They had returned with livestock, although it is not certain how this had been obtained. There was, however, a certain "Bastaard-Hottentot" called Donderbos who had returned from north of the Orange three years before with livestock which he and his Khoikhoi followers had stolen from the "Caffers". These in turn, were then stolen by "die Hottentotten Captain Africaander", before Adam Kok senior had returned the sheep to the "Caffers". Cornelius had heard that the roaming Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots" had acquired their guns from the colonists in exchange for livestock.⁷⁸

Even more explicit evidence of the state of violent insecurity which was beginning to develop along the Orange was provided by some Great Namaqua who were living in the Kamiesberg kraals of the Little Namaqua. These Khoikhoi - Oude Links, Cupido Links, Jantjie Schapewagter, Jantjie Gouws and Zwaarte Booij - testified on 3 February 1791 that, the year before, they had travelled two weeks journey north of the river to a kraal of the Great Namaqua. Once there they learnt from certain of their family that the kraal had been attacked by the burghers Guillian Visagie, Matthias Esterhuysen, Barend Vry, Pieter Brand and Isaak Bosman the younger. The colonists had lived for several years across the river with the "Bastaard-Hottentots" Adriaan, Gerrit de Beer, Haantjie, Mattheui, Casper, Jan Zuige and the Khoikhoi "Cobus Brockhand, Cobus Tiluhven, Windvogel, Menel en Dikkop". On a number of occasions, and not long before,

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

these men had attacked their kraals, killed several Namaqua and stolen a great part of their livestock. Three of the Great Namaqua at the kraal which the Kamiesberg Khoikhoi were visiting still bore bullet wounds from the attack.⁷⁹

After spending several days at the kraal with their family Oude Links and his companions exchanged tobacco, dagga and beads for 107 sheep. They then proposed to return to their home in Little Namaqualand but on their way back, whilst still in Great Namaqualand, they encountered the "Bastaard" Adriaan. Adrian had a large amount of stock with him and he boasted that it was he who, with one bullet had wounded a Great Namaqua in both arms. On receiving this information Oude Links told Adrian that it was his family he had attacked and that he was resolved to recover any livestock which bore his family's mark in order to hand it over to *Veldkorporaal* Van den Heever pending an enquiry. Oude Links succeeded in recovering the cattle but when he and his group were within four days of the river, as they slept beside their sheep and just as day was breaking, they were attacked by Visagie and his gang. Without uttering a word the robbers opened fire killing two men and a young woman as well as wounding a second woman. The Khoikhoi fled back to Great Namaqualand whilst Visagie stole all their stock.⁸⁰

It is not certain whether the kraal that Oude Links had visited was the same as that over which the "Hottentot Kaptein Caib [Tkauab]" presided, but the evidence of this man, given on 29 September 1791, suggests that it was in the same vicinity.⁸¹ If it was the same kraal it was not the same attack which Tkauab described to the *landdrost*, even though some of the details and characters sounded very similar to those which had occurred in the spring of 1790. Tkauab had travelled all the way from Great Namaqualand, nine days north of the river, to Stellenbosch. With him was another Namaqua called Oortman who lived closer to the river. The two of them had been escorted to the *landdrost* by a concerned burgher of the Kamiesburg, Johannes Beukes. Tkauab's complaint was that he and his people had been harassed and attacked for several years by a group of whites and "Bastart Hottentots" who took their livestock and obliged them, at times, to retreat far inland. Shortly before the last rains Esterhuisen and some "Bastaard - Hottentots" attacked them, killing fourteen and wounding twelve. All of their stock was stolen.

79. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Namaqua Hottentotten Oude Links, Cupido Links, Jantje Schapenwagter, Jantje Lowis, Zwaarte Booi, 3 Feb. 1791.

80. Ibid.

81. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Tkaub, 29 Sept. 1791.

Tkauab had fled to Oortman and together, both of them desperate to put an end to their violent victimisation, they had trekked southwards to find justice.⁸²

The government could hardly ignore this accumulating evidence of lawlessness from the north-western frontier, particularly since Visagie already had a criminal record,⁸³ and in March 1791 the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch had been ordered to summon Visagie and his companions before him.⁸⁴ Since this summons was ignored, orders for the arrest of Piet Bezuydenhout, Johannes Frederik Weitsman, Matthias Esterhuyzen, Barend Vry, Pieter Brand and Guillian Visagie were issued on 29 September 1791, the same day on which Captain Tkaub gave his evidence.⁸⁵ Once again this elicited no response, but, as luck would have it, the wife of Guillian Visagie happened to be in the Cape.

Elsabé (Elsie) Visagie, née Ras had trekked down from the Orange River with some Khoikhoi servants, some cattle and two wagon-loads of goods (doubtless ivory) in order to sell her wares and buy supplies.⁸⁶ She had arrived at the Cape on 20 July, but was still about her business, and her husband's, on 1 October when the Assistant Fiscal, J.A. Truter, and the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, Bletterman, summoned her for questioning. They wanted to know how many cattle she had brought and how many young oxen she had sold. She answered that she did not know for certain, but that there had not been any stolen cattle amongst them. The officials then demanded to inspect her "schild brieven" (debentures), from which they could see that she had been dealing with some respectable burghers, and sent a slave to summon those Khoi who had given evidence against her husband. Oude Links and his group had, presumably, been waiting since February for the chance to testify, but, unfortunately, they could not be found at that moment. Mrs. Visagie

82. Ibid; and Relas van Jolannes Hendrik Beukes, 29 Sept 1791.

83. In 1780 Visagie had a farm at Koekenaap near the northern bend of the Olifants River. He dismissed a family of five Khoi labourers from his farm and, suspecting that they were departing for Namaqualand with one of his oxen, gave chase with his neighbour Josua Joubert. At Droogekraal Joubert shot and wounded the Khoi Andries and Visagie shot and wounded Claas. Whilst Visagie chased Claas, Joubert killed Louis, the aged father of Andries. Andries and Claas survived to lay charges a year later. The two colonists were tried between December 1783 and February 1784 and Joubert was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. Visagie, who had been in prison for some time, was confined to his farm for six months. For Details see Mossop (1947) pp.112-115. The original case is in CA, CJ 346, pp.337-449.

84. CA, CJ 73, 17 March 1791, pp.94-95.

85. CA, CJ 73, 29 Sept. 1791, p.300.

86. In 1779 Gordon was told (probably by Pienaar who had just shot the first giraffe Gordon had seen) that Visagie's wife "was once chased on her horse close to a herd and having come near two of them, they were neither shy nor aggressive, but looked at her with great curiosity, since "the woman had striped clothes on". Raper and Boucher, (eds), *Gordon*, Vol. 2, p.316.

then delivered herself of the forceful opinion that it was because they did not dare to appear before her with their unfounded allegations. She demanded that Truter and Bletterman punish the Khoikhoi for their trouble making and insisted on a letter to this effect.⁸⁷

Unfortunately she seems to have over-played her hand in this instance because when the *landdrost* ordered her to appear before him two days later it was not so that he could deliver the expected letter, but so that he could confront her with her Khoikhoi accusers. To her horror, Cupido Links had the temerity to point his finger at her and, in the presence of the *landdrost*, pronounce the words "Dat lieg jy". This was obviously a shocking affront to her dignity as a white woman, but worse was to follow. Bletterman, no doubt frustrated by his inability to lay his hands on Guillian Visagie, vented his anger on Visagie's wife.:

Weet u wel waar u man geweest is, en so lang als jijluj schelmen, kanaljies en drosters in 't veld gewoonde hebben zyn en klagten gekomen, en daar jou man gevonden word, zat hy opgepakt gevleugeld, na de Kaap gebragt en aan lyf en leeven gestraft worden.⁸⁸

A few days later, still smarting from this insult, Elsabé, unwisely, went to visit J.A. Truter about his "promise" to punish her accusers. For her pains she succeeded in getting her Khoikhoi servants, Adriaan and Andreas, flung into jail. This left her without assistance, for though she had her son Are, with her he was only about thirteen years old. The consequences of this were that on her return from Truter she and Are were attacked by unknown persons in the darkness of the night. In order to save their lives they had to hand over all their possessions, including their clothes. Since Mrs. Visagie was approaching her sixtieth birthday it is not surprising that this rough treatment caused her to become sick. To add to her misery, as she lay recuperating on the farm of Michiel Eksteen, she was placed under arrest on 24 October. This was probably a type of "house arrest" for she was not allowed to depart with her oxen or wagons. In any event her oxen were now succumbing to "lamziekte" and it was only on 22 December that she was permitted to present her case to the Council of Justice.⁸⁹ Since no charges had ever been laid against her the proceedings which had taken place were judged to have been illegal and the unfortunate woman

87. CA, CJ 73, pp.352, 376-380.

88. "Do you know where your husband is? Complaints have been coming in ever since you rogues, scum and deserters have been in the veld, and when your husband is found he'll be brought to the Cape and punished with life and limb". CA, CJ 73, pp.376-380.

89. CA, CJ 73, pp.376-380; De Villiers and Pama, Vol. II, p.753.

was allowed to go. She was told, however, to tell her husband to come and answer the charges against him.⁹⁰

Eight months later, in August 1792, there was still no sign that Visagie and his companions planned to expose themselves to the judgement of the court. They had, however, condescended to inform the authorities that they had not been able to come to the Cape because they had been too busy assisting Willem van Reenen on an expedition.⁹¹ At this stage, silently and subtly, the powerful influence of the Van Reenen family began to permeate the court room, convincing the officials that the activities of the Visagie gang should be viewed in a different light. Although the nature of Willem van Reenen's expedition was supposedly a secret, highly placed members of the government were in the know and avaricious fantasies were beginning to unbalance the scales of justice.

Willem van Reenen had, with the fore knowledge of the government, undertaken a journey north of the Orange River in order to find gold. Van Reenen was convinced that he knew where a gold mine was which, he claimed, the English explorer Paterson had discovered during the course of his travels in 1778. Since two of Willem's brothers, Jacobus and Sebastiaan, had accompanied Paterson on large sections of his inland travels (and since Willem was undertaking to pay all costs himself), the government saw no reason why they should not endorse the expedition.⁹² Willem commenced his journey on 17 September 1791 and returned to his farm on the Olifants River on 21 June 1792 with one thousand pounds in weight of ore. Things looked decidedly promising.⁹³

Reading through Willem van Reenen's report, Governor Rhenius, and the Commissioners Nederburg and Frykenius, could not help but be impressed by the invaluable assistance which Barend Vry, Frederik Wysman (or Weitsman), Pieter Brand and Guillian Visagie had given to the quest for gold.⁹⁴ In Little Namaqualand, Van Reenen had been joined by the "Bastaard" Klaas van der Westhuysen and Frederik Wysman, both with oxen and wagons. Across the Orange, at Warm Bad in present-day Namibia, Barend Vry (or Freyn) and Pieter Brand had

90. CA, CJ 73, p.380.

91. CA, CJ 74, 13 Aug. 1792, pp.237-9.

92. Willem van Reenen's journal is in E.E. Mossop (ed) *The Journal of Hendrik Jacob Wikar (1779) and The Journals of Jacobus Coetse Jansz: (1760) and Willem van Reenen (1791)* (Cape Town 1935) pp.292-323, 9-11. See also J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboek* (Cape Town, 1938) pp.189-207.

93. Mossop (1935) pp.323, 292-3, note 1a.

94. Nederburg and Frykenius' response is in Franken (1938) pp.194-203.

joined the group with wagons and oxen. Vry, it seems, was accustomed to pasturing his cattle in this part of the world. At Modderfontein, the site of present-day Keetmanshoop, Guillian Visagie had his farm where he treated Van Reenen most kindly, entertaining him for a month and providing him with Khoikhoi servants.⁹⁵ On Van Reenen's return from his destination (probably the present day Rehoboth),⁹⁶ he was forced to throw himself on Visagie's hospitality again since most of his oxen had either died or been plundered. Visagie would gladly have supplied him with fresh oxen had it not been for the fact that his own "were thin and in poor condition because his wife had taken nine months on the journey from the Modderfontein to the Cape and back home again".⁹⁷ As it was he and his "Bastaard" followers gave Van Reenen twenty-one cattle and twenty sheep when, over five weeks later, he resumed his journey. Between Modderfontein and Warm Bad Solomon Kok assisted him with trek oxen until, once more, Barend Vry came to the rescue, accompanying Van Reenen as far as the Kamiesberg.⁹⁸

The authorities could thus clearly see that if there was a gold mine north of the Orange the key to its development lay in the hands of those very frontiersmen they were so anxious to arrest.

The ore still had to be tested but, in the meantime, Sebastiaan van Reenen came before the government to give them his personal assurance that it was gold-bearing. He could vouch for this, he urged, since he had personally accompanied Paterson to the mine in 1778 and had subsequently sent samples of ore to Amsterdam where they had been favourably assessed by an expert. His proposal was that the government should finance an expedition to investigate the viability of reaching the mine from the vicinity of Walvis Bay. Such an expedition, he argued, should comprise two sections; a sea-borne detachment which would link up with a group travelling overland from the south. The task of the overland group would be to ensure the friendly assistance of the local Khoi and it would, of necessity, be led by Barend Vry and Frederik Wysman.⁹⁹

With these developments in mind the Council of Justice gave evidence of a remarkable change in attitude when next, in August 1792, they discussed the Visagie affair.¹⁰⁰ They decided that they

95. Mossop (1935) pp.292-307. See note 2, pp.306-7 for derivation of Modderfontein.

96. Mossop (1935) pp.310-311, n.37.

97. Mossop (1935) pp.317-319.

98. Mossop (1935) pp.319-323.

99. Franken, pp.189-207.

100. CA, CJ 74, 15 Aug 1792, pp.241-2.

could proceed against the defendants even though they were *in absentia*. Attorney Wagenaer, acting for the defendants, maintained that there was no law which forbade colonists from crossing the Orange River. The *plakkaat* of 16 June 1774 mentioned the Fish River of the eastern frontier as being a boundary beyond which colonists should not go but said nothing about the Orange or Groote River. Though this same *plakkaat* mentioned that farmers should not go beyond the limits of their loan-farms, Wagenaer argued that the defendants had been completely ignorant of this ruling and had, in any case, been obliged to seek pasture for their livestock on account of the severe drought. As far as the graver charges of trading with, and attacking the Khoikhoi, were concerned the defendants strenuously denied all such allegations, maintaining that they had never harmed anyone from "den Hottentots Natiën". In support of this they could offer the evidence of Willem van Reenen, who had just returned from a journey to their district and had had the opportunity to meet with the neighbouring Khoikhoi.¹⁰¹

After considering this defence the Council of Justice decided to drop the issue, confining itself to the platitudinous remarks that the defendants should, in future, stay on their farms and conduct themselves in a law abiding manner.¹⁰² One cannot but speculate that the authorities had their minds on gold and on Sebastiaan van Reenen's proposals. The prospect of discovering gold mines north of the Orange may also help to explain why the government did not, at this stage, seek to define the north-western boundaries of the colony. There is no question that, had gold been found, the boundary would have been shifted northwards to include the mines within the domain of the VOC.

Sebastiaan van Reenen's expedition did, in fact, take place between January and April 1793. It was somewhat of a fiasco, largely because the overland expedition of Vry and Wysman did not succeed in reaching the sea-borne participants at Walvis Bay. This failure was no doubt due to the terrible drought in southern Namibia although there is an element of mystery surrounding the entire affair.¹⁰³ Sebastiaan had taken with him his brother, Dirk, and that seasoned veteran of the northern frontier zone, Petrus Pienaar, but between them they did little more than engage in some pleasant hunting up the Swakop River. Pienaar, who walked up the river for twelve days,

101. CA, CJ 74, 16 Aug. 1792, pp.245-247.

102. CA, CJ 74, 16 Aug. 1792, pp.246-247.

103. V.S. Forbes, in *Pioneer Travellers in South Africa*, pp.82-83, mentions the fact that Paterson, the alleged discoverer of the gold, had not gone anywhere near the site of Willem van Reenen's mine during his travels of 1778-1779 and Willem could not, therefore, have received directions from him. Sebastiaan, who accompanied Paterson, would have known this and it is unlikely that he would have sent Willem on a wild goose chase. Forbes speculates that perhaps Duminy was right in assuming that the expedition was really interested in ivory.

was told by some Khoikhoi that the mine which Willem van Reenen had visited was another twelve or fourteen days journey to the south-east. He and his party did not, however, venture to go further, partly because relations with the local Khoikhoi were not on a sound footing, and partly because it had not rained in those parts for five years and there would therefore be no water, and partly because of the failure of Vry and Wysman to reach them. These two were supposed to have ensured that the Khoikhoi Captain Tremond, near whose kraal the mine was, would be well-disposed towards the expedition; but since there was no guarantee that they had achieved their goal the mission was aborted. Duminy, who had captained the expedition's ship to Walvis Bay, was inclined to believe that the Van Reenens had been deceiving the government and that the real purpose of the trip had been "that these gentlemen believed that they would be able to procure for themselves two hundred elephants' tusks! That is certainly worth a mine".¹⁰⁴ If this was in fact the Van Reenens' objective - and Sebastiaan had asked for permission to shoot elephant - then the expedition was a failure on this account too. Pienaar shot a mere three elephants (though he shot twenty rhinoceros) for although the Swakoprivier valley was teeming with game - "he had never seen a more beautiful dry river" - there was no wagon to carry ivory.¹⁰⁵

Willem van Reenen's ore had, in the meantime been analysed and found to be copper bearing. It is possible that Sebastiaan's earlier samples had, indeed, been gold bearing for some gold was subsequently discovered in the Rehoboth area.¹⁰⁶ Sebastiaan certainly believed in his mine strongly enough to urge the government to undertake another expedition but the matter was dropped. The VOC had, at least, taken possession of five bays (including Walvis Bay) up the Namibian coast during the course of Duminy's voyage so the venture had not been entirely fruitless.¹⁰⁷ They had not, however, done anything to check the burgeoning anarchy of the northern frontier zone and, as they would soon discover, they had not heard the last of the Visagies.

PETRUS PIENAAR AND THE AFRIKANERS

Whilst the authorities had been pre-occupied with the activities of the Visagies and the Van Reenens the military situation as a whole, along the entire northern frontier, had been

104. Franken, p.295.

105. Franken, p.316.

106. Mossop (1935) p.11; Forbes, p.82.

107. Franken, pp.189-207.

deteriorating. In 1790 the *veldwagtmeester* of the Roggeveld was predicting the loss of that district and by 1791 farmers were abandoning their farms in the Hantam. A commando had been ordered to the Hantam in June 1791,¹⁰⁸ but it is doubtful whether it was mobilised for, two years later, Petrus Pienaar - just back from his excursion to Walvis Bay - was bewailing the fact that no help had ever been received from the *veldwagtmeesters* of the Olifants River, Bidouw or Namaqualand.¹⁰⁹

The heart of W.A. Nel, the *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam, was clearly not in his duties for earlier, in April, he had written to request permission to resign his post since his farm was too far away from San attacks for him to raise a commando in time.¹¹⁰ He also pleaded sickness and weakness of body as a reason to be relieved from his responsibilities. It is interesting to note that Nel himself had come to endorse Pienaar's criticisms of his command. In fact, Pienaar was amongst those whom Nel recommended as a possible replacement as *veldwagtmeester*. But Nel's request was not immediately heeded for in November 1791 he had to write along the same lines again, explaining that he was no longer resident in the Hantam but fifteen hours journey away. If, Nel concluded, none of the people he had previously recommended was considered to be a suitable replacement for him, he would like to propose William Burger for the position of *veldwagtmeester*.¹¹¹

This latter appointment was made, no doubt to Pienaar's chagrin, as he considered himself to be the most suitable candidate. Before 1792 there had been little evidence to link Pienaar to the illegal livestock raids taking place along and beyond the Orange River. Cornelius Kok had testified (to *Landdrost* Bletterman) that Captain Afrikaner had stolen ill-gotten livestock from the "Bastaard-Hottentot" Donderbos, probably in 1787, but this, in itself, did not incriminate Pienaar.¹¹² Afrikaner was, however, being used by Pienaar as a semi-official scourge of malefactors on the northern frontier.

108. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz to Landdrost, 15 Oct. 1790; CA, 1/STB 10/163 (Notes in front of volume) 7 June 1791.

109. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Pienaar to Landdrost, 3 June 1793.

110. CA, 1/STB 10/166, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 20 April 1791.

111. CA, 1/STB 10/167, W.A. Nel to Landdrost, 15 Nov. 1791. Bradlow is mistaken to believe that Pienaar was appointed as *veldwagtmeester* between June and October 1790 (Bradlow "Petrus Pienaar", p.97, n.27). This mistake has arisen because of a misreading of the date on a document. The document in question is CA 1/STB 10/163, Pienaar to Landdrost, 29 Oct. 1794 not 1790.

112. CA, 1/STB 3/12 Relas van Cornelius Kok, 14 Nov. 1790.

In 1792 Pienaar had decided to act independently of *Veldwagtmeester* Burger and use the restless energy of Afrikaner and his followers to harry the San of Bushmanland.¹¹³ Despite the fact that Pienaar was not the official *veldwagtmeester* of the Hantam he could claim that, by arming Afrikaner and unleashing him against the enemies of the VOC, he was acting both legitimately and commendably. It was at about this time that Company officials were busy thinking up new approaches to the problems of military security on the colonial frontier. The old idea of a standing force or permanent commando was suggested but dismissed as being too expensive.¹¹⁴ In July 1792 the Council of Policy had approved a suggestion that a reward of 15 Ryksdaalders per head should be paid to the person who was responsible for taking captive such San, "Bastaards" or "Hottentots" who had been responsible for attacks on colonial life or livestock - provided that such a capture was made on an officially authorised commando.¹¹⁵ This resolution was inspired by two seemingly contradictory motives: to inspire greater enthusiasm for commando service; and to prevent the complete extirpation of the San. Captives were to be sent to Robben Island or put to work in chains at the public works of the Company for the rest of their lives. A further stipulation was that the sale of firearms to "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi was strictly forbidden.¹¹⁶

It is hardly surprising that there should have been some who failed to appreciate the spirit in which the above resolutions concerning rewards for captives had been passed. One of these was Petrus Pienaar who, early in 1794, offered to undertake commandos at his own expense provided that he received the promised bounty of 15 Rds per adult San. As a further mark of his goodwill he stated himself to be prepared to accept the reduced rate of 10 Rds per child San captured. The Council of Policy hastened to explain to Pienaar that the bounty had been offered in the hope that the "naturellen" would be taken as prisoners of war, not to encourage a trade, and that the resolution had been motivated solely by the humanitarian desire, to avoid the spilling of human blood. They feared that the greatest confusion would arise if the inhabitants were allowed to take "die schepselen" into captivity.¹¹⁷ It is unlikely that Pienaar was aware of these financial incentives before November 1792 for shortly after passing these resolutions, the authorities

113. CA, C 209, 20 Nov. 1792, pp.245-250.

114. See Resolutions of 31 Aug. 1791 and 13 July 1792. Significantly, in the light of Afrikaner's activities, the proposal was to employ twenty-five "Bastaard-Hottentots" at 5 Rijkdaalders per month. *Papers Relative*, p.21; CA, Accessions (hereafter A) 1657, Vol. 25.

115. P.J. van der Merwe, *Noorwaartse Beweging*, pp.44-9.

116. Plakkaat 1 Oct 1792, in *Papers Relative*, p.21.

117. CA, C 221, 11 Jan. 1794, pp.96-100.

received news from Pienaar of the exploits of the "Hottentot captain Afrikaner" in Bushmanland which must have both gratified and alarmed them.

Afrikaner and his men had succeeded in killing 113 San and taking 20 prisoners in the vicinity of the Sak River. Though such slaughter seemed contrary to the new resolution (which encouraged the capture rather than the extermination of resisters), and might not have occurred if Pienaar had known of the offer of bounty, it was, if nothing else, evidence of efficiency. The Council of Policy was informed, moreover, that even greater results might have been achieved if gunpowder and shot had been supplied to Pienaar, who guaranteed that he could tame and stop the "woedende natie" once and for all. Afrikaner himself appears to have made the journey to Cape Town in order to procure guns and ammunition in the name of his director, Pienaar. The Councillors were sufficiently impressed to agree to his request, and Afrikaaner was provided with powder and shot on the condition that Pienaar and his *veldwagtmeester* supervised the use to which he would employ them. It was instructed that the prisoners be brought to the Cape.¹¹⁸

Afrikaner's commando had been a triumph for both the Afrikaners and Pienaar. At a time when the access of the "Bastaards and Hottentots" to guns and ammunition was becoming more and more difficult the Afrikaners had government guaranteed supplies. Pienaar, for his part, had demonstrated that he was the *de facto* military commander of the northern frontier zone, whatever Burger's official pretensions might be.

In 1793, just as with W.A. Nel in 1790, Pienaar began to take steps to discredit Willem Burger in the eyes of the authorities and supplant him as *veldwagtmeester*. His strategy consisted of sending letters of complaint to the *landdrost* and in this he was assisted by his friend Christiaan Bok of the Hantam. In a letter written in January 1793, Bok complained of having his sheep stolen (and slaughtered) for the second time and his shepherd killed. These robberies by the San he blamed on the negligence of *Veldwagtmeester* Burger. Farms were being deserted and if Burger continued as *veldwagtmeester*, concluded Bok with spiteful humour, he would find none in the Hantam before two years had elapsed.¹¹⁹ In May Burger was able to report in his defence that, although there had been attacks on four farms within a short space of time, and although stock had been stolen, he had managed to shoot dead thirteen robbers.¹²⁰

118. CA, C 209, 20 Nov. 1792, pp.245-250.

119. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, C. Bok to Landdrost, 26 Jan. 1793.

120. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, W. Burger to Landdrost, 18 May 17.

But this was quite clearly not enough as far as Pienaar was concerned, for in June, after returning from his trip with the Van Reneens, he sent two remarkable letters to *Landdrost* Bletterman in which he criticised Burger in personal and colourful terms. In the first letter Pienaar claimed that no commando had been organised to deal with the San because of the negligence and incompetence of Willem Burger. He had been urged most strongly to raise a commando last August and September but in vain, as he had stupidly done nothing. When the cattle of the widow Ryk, Willem Nel and Paul Karsten had been stolen; indeed when Pienaar's own sheep had been stolen, Burger had replied to a request to raise a commando by telling Pienaar to raise one himself. Pienaar had, in fact, managed to recover some of the stolen livestock even though he only had seven men to help him. Not long after this, however, the San had stolen 1 200 sheep from Pienaar's neighbour, Michiel Bok. Thanks to Pienaar's quick response some of these were recovered and two of the thieves shot dead, but no assistance was forthcoming from Burger, apart from a few men. No ammunition and no Khoikhoi commando members were sent to help Pienaar and, when he (Pienaar) saw San spoor in the vicinity, Burger refused to give him the support necessary to follow these. Pienaar was certain that the *Krygsraad* could appreciate that one could not appoint as commander a youngster who had just arrived in the district, especially if it was full of San who were cunning and prepared for war. The man in question had never before fired a shot in anger. Pienaar requested, therefore, that they be sent enough powder and shot to defend themselves and the *veldwagtmeester* could then stay at home exercising his authority over children.¹²¹

Less than a month later Pienaar found himself obliged to write another letter of complaint, again prompted by Burger's incompetence. The San had once more stolen and destroyed his sheep - the third time - and Christian Bok's sheep - the second time. Between them both they had lost 900 cattle but when one mentioned a commando to Burger he walked away, or said that he would get round to it soon, but in any event, did nothing. Pienaar estimated that he had now asked Burger seven times to raise a commando but that he had only received an answer to the last of these requests and that the answer was that Burger was sick of such letters. Twenty of the best farms in the Hantam were now deserted and Pienaar requested that a competent *veldwagtmeester* be appointed, one who was brave and knowledgeable, who had gone on many commandos and who was a good soldier; not like Burger who had never (and this time Pienaar refined the insult of his previous letter) shot a gun in his life. Quite clearly Pienaar was hinting that he met all these requirements and the post script added to the letter drove home the point - "Wy denke dric

121. CA, I/STB 10/162, Pienaar to Landdrost, 3 June 1793.

bosjeman agter het gerooft vee hebbe dood geschote". Christiaan Bok, had already weighed in with another letter along the same lines as Pienaar, in which he berated Burger's inactivity.¹²²

As the written onslaught against Burger gained momentum the continuing activities of Afrikaner, to the north of the Orange River, brought further credit to his patron, Pienaar. On 23 July 1793 the Council of Policy received a letter from Bletterman, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, in which he reported that Captain "Africander" had handed over six muskets to him. These, Bletterman reported, had been captured by Afrikaner from the "bastaart Hottentotten" who continually stole the cattle of the Namaqua.¹²³

In fact Afrikaner's attack had been launched on Guiliam Visagie and we are fortunate that we have two accounts of the incident; one from Afrikaner and one from a Khoikhoi by the name of Kiewit Kiewit.¹²⁴

In the winter of 1790 Kiewit was asked by a Khoikhoi called Donderbos Pokkebaas whether he would accompany him and a Khoikhoi called Viool to Namaqualand in order to try to reclaim some cattle which had been stolen from him by the "Hottentot Captain Africaaner". Donderbos Pokkebaas was undoubtedly the same man whom Cornelius Kok had described in 1790, referring to him as the "Bastaard-Hottentot Donderbosh" who had stolen livestock from the Tswana in 1787 before these were, in turn, stolen from him by Afrikaner.¹²⁵ Donderbos was now determined to revenge himself and for this purpose had acquired a musket. Having recruited Viool and Kiewit he then visited a certain Jacob Tas, south of the Doorn River, to borrow another flint-lock. Next they were joined by another two Khoikhoi men and the group, like so many before them, set off for Namaqualand. They crossed the Great River and decided to throw in their lot with the group of men gathered about Guiliam Visagie at his farm "Qallooras Fontijn".¹²⁶ These included both "Bastaard-Hottentots" and Khoikhoi; men such as Jan Seewert, Adriaan

122. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Pienaar to Landdrost, 29 June 1793. "We think we shot dead three Bushmen following the stolen cattle". Also Bok to Landdrost, 11 June 1793.

123. CA, C 217, 7 Aug. 1793, pp.206-208.

124. CA, C 217, 7 Aug. 1793, pp.206-208 and CA 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Kiewit Kiewit, 5 Oct. 1793.

125. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Cornelis Kok, 14 Nov. 1790.

126. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Kiewit Kiewit, 5 Oct. 1793. It is not clear where "Qallooras Fontijn" was, though presumably it was in the vicinity of "Modderfontein" or Keetmanshoop in Namibia.

Beestehoorn, Brander, Willem Mallegaas, Booij, Cupido Wessel, Cobus Booij, Daris, Casper, his brother Jantjie, Marthenis and his brother Robbert.¹²⁷

Many of these Khoikhoi were probably Namaqua from the south of the river, i.e. they were not Great Namaqua. There was, indeed, a special term, noted by Willem van Reenen in 1792, that the Great Namaqua applied to these southern interlopers: Goedonsie. The likelihood is that this was a Khoikhoi word with the same meaning as "oorlamme" and it is evident that at this stage relations between the Goedonsie and Gei-//khaum (the Red Nation) were far from cordial.¹²⁸

The Visagie group centred around a herd of about 600 cattle, half of which belonged to Visagie and the other half to the so-called "oorlamse en Namacqua hottentots".¹²⁹ Kiewit claimed that Visagie had acquired these by trading with trinkets and tobacco but the evidence of Visagie's past victims should not be forgotten. Willem van Reenen had noted in 1792 that the Namaqua or Goedonsie of Southern Namibia were in striking distance of the Herero, a people who were so helpless that both they and their cattle were the easiest of prey.¹³⁰ It would have been extraordinary if Visagie's men had not availed themselves of the opportunity to exploit their feeble northern neighbours for there is good evidence that they had no qualms about robbing the stronger Great Namaqua.¹³¹ Cornelius Kok's report that the Visagies had driven large herds of cattle south of the Orange¹³² should also alert us to the fact that the herd of 600 which Kiewit described was probably only a basic minimum needed for the groups' survival. Any surplus cattle would be sold in the colony, very likely to the Van Reenens themselves.

One day, around July 1793, Kiewit was sent by Visagie's wife to find the carcasses of three quagga, which had been shot in the veld by Booij, and to load their flesh onto an ox. On his return the next day, Kiewit found that the kraal had been attacked by Klaas Afrikaner and his gang who

127. Kiewit also mentioned that in addition to Barend Vry other colonists in the vicinity were Andries van Zijl and his (or his brother's) wife.

128. Mossop, *Wikar*, Willem van Reenen's Journal, pp.311-313, n.39; p.321; Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.371-373.

129. These are Kiewit's words.

130. Mossop, *Brink*, Willem van Reenen's Journal, pp.315-317. "The Damraas, and even the Numaquas themselves gave us to understand that if the Numaquas wish to obtain cattle they go to the Commaka Damerassen and barter or steal as many as they want or can manage to take away. When Pienaar returned from his trip up the Swartkop River in 1793, Duminy noted sourly that he "brought a little black boy and a little Damara negress, whom he says he received as a present from their mother and accepted them for the sake of humanity rather than to let them die of starvation! It appears that his kind heart is fairly at one with his interest". Franken, *Duminy-Dagboek*, p.294.

131. See the evidence in CA, I/STB 3/12. For references see pp.331-333 above.

132. CA, I/STB 3/12, 14 Nov. 1790.

were, at that moment, fleeing precipitously. What seems to have happened is that Mrs. Visagie, who had been riding on a wagon with Casper, had the misfortune to bump into Klaas Afrikaner and his "zoo genaamde soldaaten" (so-called soldiers). The two had narrowly escaped but they had to leave the wagon in flames behind them. They found their way back to the farm and warned Guillian and the others that the Afrikaners were near.

Next morning Afrikaner attacked but Visagie was well prepared. Most of his men were provided with flint-locks and they opened fire as soon as Afrikaner approached. Three or four of Afrikaner's men were shot dead whilst two of Visagie's followers were wounded. Somehow, despite their losses, the Afrikaners managed to capture six of the Visagies' firearms and drive away 300 of their cattle. In the flurry and fury however, Afrikaner lost his staff of office and was, as he admitted, lucky to escape.¹³³ Soon afterwards the Visagies, the Van Zijls and Barend Vry moved back south of the river, not so much because of this reversal, however, but because of the terrible drought afflicting southern Namibia.¹³⁴

Landdrost Bletterman was delighted with Afrikaner's news, a clear indication that the authorities were no longer concerned with cultivating the Visagies. The *landdrost* reminded the governor that it was Afrikaner who, the year before, had shot dead a great number of San. He was therefore authorising Afrikaner to deliver the captured muskets to the armoury at the Cape where, it was hoped, they could be repaired and utilised by the "Hottentot Corps". In addition, Bletterman asked the governor to replace Afrikaner's staff of office and provide him with the necessary pass to ensure his safe return.¹³⁵

It seems unlikely that Pienaar would have authorised this attack by his subordinate on people with whom he had been co-operating a bare three months before. Perhaps he did. But it is more likely that Afrikaner acted on his own initiative. In this he had done well to identify himself with the government's interests. Indeed his activities should be seen against the background of increasing attempts by the colonial authorities to restrict the freedom of Khoisan and "Bastaards" within the colony. The obligation of "Bastaard-Hottentots" to carry passes has already been mentioned, so too has the imposition of the "Inboek" system for "Bastaard-Hottentots" in 1775, in addition to compulsory participation in commandos. "Bastaard-Hottentots" were required, by

133. CA, 1/STB 3/12, Relas van Hottentot Kiewiet Kiewiet, 5 Oct. 1793; CA, C217, 7 Aug. 1793.

134. CA, 1/STB 3/12, 5 Oct. 1793.

135. CA, C 217, 7 Aug. 1793.

law, in 1781, to assist in the armed defence of the Cape against foreign invasion. This law was extended to Khoikhoi and reiterated for "Bastaards" in 1793. After 1787 "Bastaard-Hottentots" not in service were required to pay taxation and had to be placed on *opgaafrollen*.¹³⁶ All of these restrictions, as well as the 1792 prohibition on selling arms or ammunition to Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots", served to limit the independence of "Bastaard-Hottentots" and the Afrikaners had chosen a path of co-operation which gave them more freedom than their fellows. The price that they paid was that they were regarded as being members of the VOC "police force" whilst Klaas Afrikaner was registered in the Hottentot Corps as a Khoikhoi chief in August 1793.¹³⁷

The collaborationist behaviour of Klaas Afrikaner and his followers in this instance might surprise and embarrass those who prefer to see the Afrikaners as they were portrayed by SWAPO in the 1960s - as proto-Namibian nationalist resisters of white South African colonialism. The Afrikaners did indeed become both colonial resisters and the rulers of much of central and southern Namibia in the nineteenth century but their earlier co-operation with Petrus Pienaar is quite consistent with what we know about other examples of African resistance to colonialism. One of the most important insights to emerge from the rich historiography on African resistance (a burgeoning field of study from the 1960s onwards) was that "the entire attempt to divide 'resisters' from 'collaborators', as if they were mutually exclusive categories, was, in many instances a meaningless exercise".¹³⁸ As Ranger phrased it: "A historian has indeed a difficult task in deciding whether a specific society should be described as 'resistant' or as 'collaborative' over any given period of time. Many societies began in one camp and ended in the other."¹³⁹ Wieskel explains that resistance and collaboration have to be studied jointly in any given society. They also have to be seen against the background of local political traditions and in the economic context of the region. Just as the Baule of the Ivory Coast collaborated with the French when it

136. Resolutions of the Council of Policy. Resolution 9 March 1781; Resolution 2 and 4 April 1781; Resolution 20 Nov 1787; *Plakkaat* of 2 May 1793, in *Papers Relative*

137. Du Bruyn, "Oorlams", p.7. It is interesting to note that in August and September 1793 "Jonker Africaander", Klaas' son went on commando with *Veldwagmeester* Gerrit Maritz to the Karasberg. See CA, 1/STB 10/164, Journal of Commando by G. Maritz, 20 Aug. 1793.

138. Timothy Wieskel, "Changing Perspectives on African Resistance Movements and the Case of the Baule Peoples", in R.E. Dumett and B.K. Swartz, (eds.), *West African Culture Dynamics: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives* (Hague, 1981), p.549. See also Terence Ranger, "Connections between 'primary resistance' movements and modern mass nationalism in East and Central Africa", *Journal of African History*, 9, 1968, pp.437-454, 631-642; T. Ranger, "Resistance in Africa: From Nationalist Revolt to Agrarian Protest", in Gary Y. Okihiro, (ed.), *In Resistance: Studies in African, Carribbean and Afro-American History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

139. Quoted by Wieskel, see note above.

suited them and opposed the French when they felt that vital political and economic interests were being threatened, so too did the Afrikaners act in accordance with their own interests.¹⁴⁰

In the northern Cape frontier zone the most powerful political and military force was the commando. Economic power, in the form of control over labour, land and livestock, flowed from the commando. Whoever controlled the most powerful commando was, *ipso facto*, the most powerful, both politically and economically. This was the context of the 1790s when, it seemed clear, Petrus Pienaar was pre-eminent. His power was based on the fact that he had created the most efficient fighting machine in the frontier zone. He had the necessary drive and ambition to be a good leader; he had the necessary contacts and knowledge to exploit the region's full potential; he had a state-approved supply of arms and ammunition; and he had the highly motivated service of the followers of Klaas Afrikaner. The Afrikaners, of course, fought in Pienaar's commando because it was in their best interests to do so. Their power rose with that of their patron. Their strategy should thus be viewed neither as collaboration nor resistance but as the maximisation of self-interest in the commando dominated context of the frontier zone. For as long as their interests were being met they would serve Pienaar and grow powerful. The moment they became more powerful than Pienaar, or thought themselves to be exploited rather than promoted, they would review their options.

It is important to note that although the Afrikaners subsequently became the most notorious and successful of all Oorlam groups their early history, before Pienaar's rise to prominence, did little to distinguish them from other, similar groups of "Bastaard-Hottentot" or Khoikhoi frontiersmen. Like them they were brought up to serve white masters and educated in the hard school of the commando. Like them they learnt to ride horses, handle firearms, speak Dutch and value European commodities. Like other "Bastaard-Hottentots" or Khoikhoi in white employment they gradually became aware of their distinctive identity, for their partial assimilation of European culture had set them apart from less acculturated Khoisan without granting them equal entry into white society. Like others before, and after them, there came a time to escape from colonial authority even whilst they maintained or developed their Oorlam identity and the sustaining structures of the commando system. The Afrikaners, then, shared a common background with many other Oorlams of the frontier zone, such as the Koks, the Barends or men like Donderbos Pokkebaas. What set them apart was that, thanks to Pienaar, they became the most powerful commando group of the northern frontier. They could equally, however, have ended up as the

140. Wieskel, pp.545-61.

protégés of one of the other colonists who, like Pienaar, led private commandos on hunting, raiding or trading expeditions. The parallel careers of men like Adriaan van Zyl and Guillian Visagie should alert us to the fact that just as the Afrikaners were one group amongst many, so too was Pienaar one man (albeit outstanding) amongst several other frontier colonists engaged in similar pursuits. Together, however, the combination of Pienaar and the Afrikaners proved to be virtually unbeatable.¹⁴¹

It is hardly surprising that the power, privileges and relative independence of the Afrikaners should have been viewed in an alarming light by certain white farmers of the northern frontier. Particularly affected were the *veldwagtmeesters* who saw the existence of an officially approved, quasi-independent group of armed and mounted "Bastaard-Hottentots" as a threat to their authority. Even more disturbing was the fact that the Afrikaners seemed answerable only to Petrus Pienaar, a man of dubious contacts and forceful ambitions, who had proved that he was quite prepared to go over the heads of the local government appointees in order to increase his growing influence. The *veldwagtmeester* who was most threatened by the Afrikaner-Pienaar alliance was Willem Burger of the Hantam. He must have realised that his only hope of remaining in favour with the government was to prove Pienaar's accusations false by taking more vigorous action against the San. So, on 1 August he wrote to *Landdrost* Bletterman announcing his intention to go on commando in September. He asked for powder, shot, guns and reinforcements from the Olifants River but, to no avail.¹⁴² On 23 September *Landdrost* Bletterman dismissed Willem Burger from the office of *veldwagtmeester*, giving as his reason for doing so the evidence

141. There are certain similarities between Pienaar and the Afrikaners and the Prazeros and the Chikunda of the Zambezi River. The Prazeros were powerful political rulers, of Portuguese origin, in the Zambezi Valley of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Chikunda were their private armies of warrior slaves, sometimes numbering up to 15 000 men. The Chikunda would engage in hunting, trading and raiding for their Prazeros, enjoying considerable independence. Inevitably, some groups of Chikunda broke away from their masters and established themselves independently. They were responsible for introducing new forms of military and political organisation, as well as new cultural influences, to the societies of southern Central Africa, thus playing a very similar role to the Oorlams. There are obvious differences of scale. The Prazeros also became far more Africanised than Pienaar, or most other white frontiersmen of the northern Cape, ever did. Thus Pienaar was not, strictly speaking, a "transfrontiersman" (that is, someone who has crossed the frontier of their own culture area to take up a new way of life) like the Prazeros were. It is perhaps the Oorlams themselves who were the transfrontiersmen. See Allen Isaacman, "The origin, formation and early history of the Chikunda", *Journal of African History*, XII, 3, 1972, pp.443-61; Allen and Barbara Isaacman, "The Prazeros as Trans-frontiersmen", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, VIII, 1, 1975, pp.1-39; T.I. Mathews, "Portuguese, Chikunda and Peoples of the Gwembe Valley: The Impact of the 'Lower Zambezi Complex' on Southern Zambia", *Journal of African History*, XXII, 1981, pp.23-41.

142. CA, 1/STB 10/162, W. Burger to Landdrost, 14 Aug. 1793.

in the letters of Pienaar and Bok as well as "many complaints of the same nature against Burger" which he had received.¹⁴³

The Afrikaners were not the only "Bastaard-Hottentots" to threaten the control normally exercised by *veldwagtmeesters* through officially sanctioned commandos. Nor was Burger the only *veldwagtmeester* to feel dangerously insecure. An extraordinary wave of fear, directed at independent Khoikhoi or "Bastaard-Hottentot" groups, swept through the western and northern Cape frontier zones in 1793. On 7 September Piet Joubert, the *veldwagtmeester* of Swellendam, believed that he had discovered a conspiracy amongst the Khoikhoi of his district and the Hex River to join forces with the Khoikhoi and "Bastaard-Hottentots" of Namaqualand in order to attack the colony. Joubert had captured a Khoikhoi by the name of Klaas Kees, son of Captain Kees. Klaas revealed that he (and his two companions who had also been captured) was engaged in preparing the local Khoikhoi to rise up against the colonists. The insurrection involved the simultaneous attack by Donderbos Pokkerbaas and 400 of his followers, armed with guns, in Namaqualand whilst "Ruijter Besie" would have the responsibility of marshalling his followers at "Branderivier". A Khoikhoi by the name of Barent, who had passed through Kogmanskloof to Riviersonderend on 20 July, was on his way, together with five men and thirty women and children, to Namaqualand. There they planned to leave the women and children before returning, equipped for war, to spread rebellion in the district of Riviersonderend with the help of Captain Kees. Joubert urged that his letter should be circulated from *veldwagtmeester* to *veldwagtmeester* so that Barent and his followers could be caught before getting beyond the Witsenberg and reaching Namaqualand. According to Klaas Kees there were already forty armed men, waiting at the kraal of Captain Kees in the mountains (twenty with guns, twenty with bows and arrows), and ready to strike.¹⁴⁴ This exciting information from the Roodezand was indeed passed from *veldwagtmeester* to *veldwagtmeester* from the Olifants River to the Bokkeveld, as far as the Roggeveld and Hantam. Barent and his group had been seen crossing the Berg River at the pont on 9 September - (hardly the actions of one seeking secrecy) whilst "de schelm dondebos" was believed to be trekking through the Bokkeveld having been seen in the Bidouw.¹⁴⁵ Johannes Lubbe *veldwagtmeester* of the Olifants River, began to comb the Olifants River Mountains, proclaiming that "'t is hoog tyt om onse lant te behouden en te swijgen voor de swart

143. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, 12 Sept. 1793.

144. CA, 1/STB 10/162, From P. Joubert and B. van Bilon, 7 Sept. 1793; Penn, "Labour, land and livestock", pp.15 and 18.

145. CA, 1/STB 10/162, From B. van Bilon, 10 Sept. 1793; P. Jacobs, 15 Sept. 1793.

nasie want 't schyn of sy alle opgemaakt is weest gewapent en gereed".¹⁴⁶ In the eyes of *Veldwagtmeester* Pieter Jacobs the conspiracy was one by "oorlamse hottentots" who wished to launch a three pronged attack over the country.¹⁴⁷

It was Lubbe who, very likely, caught up with Barent's party. Quite how he handled them is not certain but on the 27 September the Council of Policy noted that they had received a letter from Bletterman, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, "representing the gross ill-treatment of a horde of innocent Hottentots, who had been made prisoners by one Mr. Lubbe and other inhabitants".¹⁴⁸

Bletterman had become aware that the fears of a Khoikhoi-Oorlam conspiracy were grossly exaggerated. There were also indications that certain *veldwagtmeesters* were using the climate of terror to licence aggressive action against Khoikhoi or Oorlam groups in their districts. Lubbe's overzealous behaviour was but one example of this for, on 27 October, Bletterman received the unwelcome intelligence that *Veldwagtmeester* Jacobus Nel of the Roggeveld, together with ex-*Veldwagtmeester* Willem Burger, had seen fit to try and arrest Klaas Afrikaner whom, they believed, was connected to the conspiracy. Bletterman icily observed that, Burger was no longer a *veldwagtmeester* and that Afrikaner had departed from Stellenbosch at the beginning of August at his, Bletterman's express command. The *landdrost* warned Nel that he had better be able to prove that Afrikaner was planning to do, or had done, some mischief, for if he failed to satisfy him he would be forced to proceed against the *veldwagtmeester*. Bletterman reminded Nel that he had failed to go on commando recently, despite having been provided with ammunition, and cautioned him to appear before the *Krygsraad* on 3 December. In conclusion Bletterman instructed Nel to comply with the written instructions which had been sent to him on 21 September, namely not to molest a single Khoikhoi who was peaceful and well-behaved or to send any as captives without evidence of their misdeeds.¹⁴⁹

This letter must have reached Nel only after he, along with Willem Burger and three other *trekboers*, had ridden to Pienaar's farm some time in October. According to Burger, Jacobus Nel, along with Willem Burger and three other men from the Roggeveld had ridden to Pienaar's farm. Nel ordered Pienaar to hand over Afrikaner so that he could be arrested and sent to the Cape but

146. CA, 1/STB 10/162, From J. Lubbe, 16 Sept. 1793. "It is high time that we save our country and (not) succumb to the black nation, for it seems as if they have all been incited; be armed and ready".

147. CA, 1/STB 10/162, From Pieter Jacobs 15 Sept. 1793.

148. Resolutions of Council of Policy, Res. 27 Sept. 1793, in *Papers Relative*.

149. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Bletterman to J. Nel, 22 Oct. 1793; 10/163, Notes in front of volume, 20 Oct. 1793.

Pienaar refused to do so. When Nel threatened to report Pienaar to the *landdrost* Pienaar said that he himself would send Afrikaner to the Cape with a letter. As the frustrated burgers mounted their horses to ride away, Pienaar asked Nel whether he had done his duty. Nel replied that he had not because Pienaar had prevented him from arresting Afrikaner. He added that "Pienaar so slegt was als de hottentot om reden dat hy de hotten so sterk mantineerd". To which Pienaar replied that Nel was "die Grootste schelm die op de Artboodem loop".¹⁵⁰

It is highly unlikely that Nel and Burger confined themselves to this simple exchange of pleasantries for on 4 March 1794 the dismissal of Burger as *veldwagtmeester* was confirmed by the *Krygsraad* of Stellenbosch for the following reasons: "in having with the commando under his orders attacked some Hottentots kraals and killed and wounded the Hottentots instead of pursuing the Bushmen".¹⁵¹ Some of the pressure to dismiss Burger had no doubt come from Bletterman and Commissioner Sluysken, who had been presented with disturbing news from the district of Swellendam. During the recent outbreak of panic the colonists of that district were convinced that Captain Kees was the co-ordinator of a Khoikhoi-Oorlam conspiracy and was about to launch an attack on the Swellendam *Drostdy*, after which he would rampage through the district killing all the Christians. It was also rumoured that he had been involved in the previous murder of two farmers, Casper Labuschagne and Jan Oosthuisen. A commando was thus despatched to capture the Khoikhoi captain and he and eighteen of his followers were sent to Cape Town for interrogation.¹⁵²

After considering the evidence Commissioner Sluysken thought the entire conspiracy to be "chimericq", invented by the Swellendammers so as to avoid having to do commando service on the eastern frontier. He implied that the Swellendam farmers were jealous of Kees, but they were also, no doubt fearful. Since Kees had recently been given twenty-six muskets by P.A. Meyburg, the ex-*Heemraden* member and Captain of the Stellenbosch citizen force. Sluysken found all the prisoners - save four - innocent, and released them so that they might return to the service of their masters. The four detainees were suspected of having been involved in the murder of Labuschagne and Oosthuisen and were confined in the Company slave lodge pending further enquiries. Kees, despite his innocence, was not allowed to return home immediately but kept in a

150. CA, I/STB 10/167, W. Burger to Landdrost, 24 Nov. 1793. "Pienaar was as bad as the Hottentots because he supported them so strongly"; "... the biggest rogue walking on earth".

151. CA, I/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, 4 March 1794.

152. Viljoen, "Khoisan Labour Relations In The Overberg", pp.216-7.

room at the Castle "tot dat de landlieden van haar schrik hersteld zijn". He was still there when the British captured the Castle two years later!¹⁵³

Sluysken, like Bletterman, was deeply disgusted by the motives and actions of the conspiracy theorists. He learnt that certain *veldwagtmeesters* and *veldkorporaals* had not hesitated to round up the wives and children of innocent Khoikhoi and then distributed them amongst themselves as labourers. He therefore wrote to the *landdrosts* of Stellenbosch and Swellendam ordering them to ensure the release of the women and children. They were also to investigate the "onmenschelyke gedrag" of the *veldwagtmeesters* and conduct an enquiry into the "verfoeilijke mishandelingen over welke eenige van deese onschuldige schepzelen hebben geklaagd".¹⁵⁴

This, then, was the context of Burger's dismissal. On 3 December 1793 he had been ordered to attend the *Krygsraad* and on 10 December several inhabitants of the Hantam had sent Bletterman a letter in Burger's support.¹⁵⁵ Their letter confined itself to defending Burger against the "lying" allegations which Pienaar had made concerning Burger's incompetence as a *veldwagtmeester*. It does not throw any light on the crimes alluded to by the Stellenbosch *Krygsraad* in March 1794 but it serves as an invaluable corrective to the picture which Pienaar had given of the sorry state of affairs in the Hantam. Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of the letter is that at least twenty-nine Hantamers were prepared to express their support for Burger and their opposition to Pienaar. Johannes Carstens maintained that Pienaar had told the greatest lies when he claimed that the San were getting the upper hand in the district and gaining more and more land. The present situation was, in fact, better than it had been before when livestock was stolen from farms deep within the colony. The signatories to the letter also dismissed allegations that Burger had been unwilling to raise commandos, explaining that commandos could only be mounted if the horses were in a fit state and ammunition was provided. Within these limitations Burger had done his best with the pitifully few men at his disposal. When Bok's sheep had been stolen in May 1793, it had been because he had been grazing them beyond everyone else without informing the *veldwagtmeester*, at the abandoned farm of the late Sara Johanna van Zijl. This farm had been abandoned years before by Sara van Zijl precisely because of its dangerous position. On this occasion Bok had only informed Burger of the robbery after four days and the horses were not fit

153. Boeseken, "Nederlandse Kommissaris", pp.86-7.

154. CA, C 698, Report of Sluysken to Nederburgh and Frykenius, 6 Dec. 1793, p.149-51. "Inhuman conduct ... abominable mishandling about which some of these innocent creatures have complained".

155. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Letter from J.A. Louw, J.P. Carstens and others from Hantam to Landdrost, 10 Dec. 1793.

for a four day journey. When Pienaar's sheep had been stolen Burger could not lead a commando himself because he was tending one of his children who lay dying at home, but he had authorised Pienaar to raise a commando himself. The final point of the Hantamers was that since some of them, W.A. Nel and Carstens, had recovered their stolen cattle by setting off immediately after the departing San, they had not found it necessary to appeal to Burger who could not, therefore, be charged with negligence. They hoped, in fact, that Burger would be reinstated.¹⁵⁶

He was not. Pienaar was appointed in his place, gaining the position which he had coveted for so long.¹⁵⁷ In June 1794 Pienaar was given permission to raise a commando in his district and at last seemed to have the free hand necessary for the extension of his personal empire in the north.¹⁵⁸ It is possible that he was slightly disappointed at the Council of Policy having put a damper on his plans to go bounty hunting; and if he had thought that on becoming *veldwagtmeester* he would be able to command the obedient service of his neighbours he was quickly disillusioned. In a long letter, which Pienaar wrote to Bletterman on 29 October 1794, he complained bitterly about the reluctance, or resistance, of the farmers in his district to undertake commando service or to provision the participants with supplies.¹⁵⁹ He stated that on his first attempt to raise a commando, in September, he mustered a mere six men with a further nine Khoikhoi, not all of whom were suitable. Half of the group then voted to return so nothing had been achieved. When summoned to appear at a certain place on a certain date, nobody arrived. If one went to fetch a man personally he would plead that he first had to slaughter a sheep to make a blanket, or kill a buck to make *velschoene*. When 1 500 sheep were stolen and the shepherds murdered, nobody obeyed the call to pursue the robbers. Eight days later a similar request brought a similar response. Willem Adriaan Nel had to take some men himself to chase his stolen stock to the Vis River; Jan van Zijl had been obliged to buy slaughter stock to provision himself before undertaking a commando to secure his stock. When Johannes Gous had stock stolen only one man arrived armed for the commando; when a general commando was planned, and twenty-four men given three months notice, only four men arrived on the appointed day. Pienaar, who had been obliged to provide his own wagon and oxen for the commando, then concentrated on getting at least six men to go with him. The first was Floris Koetse, who farmed with Lukas Visagie. He had asked to be excused on the grounds that he had to look after the farm, but Pienaar denied his request. Meanwhile Visagie wandered about from farm to farm, without

156. Ibid.

157. See note 111 above.

158. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, 3 June 1794.

159. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Pienaar to Landdrost, 29 Oct. 1794.

acknowledging Pienaar's summons, until he finally arrived on 29 September. Johannes Petrus Gous was supposedly exempted from duty by his boss but his boss (Spanneberg) spent his time hunting eland - not just for his own pot either. Andries Gous, supposedly also indispensable to his boss Spanneberg, was seen on someone else's farm and was nothing but a shirker. Willem Burger, (who lived together with Carel van der Merwe) had not initially been asked to go on commando (so that it did not seem that Pienaar was highlighting his triumph over him) but was asked to provide six sheep. Instead Pienaar received a reply that, he stated, would shame the mouth of anyone and could certainly not be put down on paper. Pienaar therefore commanded Burger and Van der Merwe to accompany him but Burger and the Gous brothers then journeyed far beyond the Sak River to shoot eland. Ostensibly this was to provision the commando. Pienaar had told them to be back before the 3rd October, since that was the date when those required for annual drill at the Cape would have to leave. If there was drill those who were going would also require *biltong*. But on the date when drill took place, 16 October, Burger was still far beyond the Sak River.¹⁶⁰

Pienaar had still not been able to get Burger out on commando by 10 August 1795 when he wrote to complain once more to Bletterman. He urged most strongly that Bletterman take measures to punish those unwilling to go on commando, especially since the San were still active in the area and there had recently been three night attacks on farms. Pienaar's own trek oxen had been stolen and had not been recovered, despite a hot pursuit by five men which left their horses weak from thirst.¹⁶¹

The letter is testimony to both Pienaar's diligence and his frustration. The duties attendant on being a *veldwagtmeester* were clearly more irksome than Pienaar had anticipated whilst the selfish and divisive spirit present amongst the Hantam *trekboers* meant that they only participated in commandos when their own interests were at stake. It is likely that Pienaar's official duties kept him close to the Hantam in 1794 although his control over supplies of powder and shot would have allowed him to allocate ammunition to his associations further north. These associates, were, respectively, the Afrikaners and Jan Bloem. They had enjoyed the sponsorship of Pienaar for several years, and in exchange had provided him with cattle and ivory. From about 1794 onwards, however, both of these men began to pursue more independent and aggressive careers along the Orange River. There had already been inklings of evidence, as far as the authorities

160. Ibid.

161. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Pienaar to Landdrost, 10 Aug. 1795.

were concerned, that Afrikaner did not always act as a docile subordinate. Such evidence began to increase.

In February 1794 a Khoikhoi by the name of Peter Joubert told the authorities that, about a year before, he had been informed by a Khoikhoi woman, Freyn Lynae, that she and her husband, Oude Michiel, had been attacked by Afrikaner. It is not clear whether the attack took place in 1793 or 1792 but it occurred at a place seven days north of the Orange River. Afrikaner had hit and killed Oude Michiel and stolen all his cattle.¹⁶² A similar incident was reported in January 1796 when a Khoikhoi, Jan Michiel, reported how, about a year before then, he had been with his father (also called Jan Michiel), Witbooi and Klaas Roos. In the evening Afrikaner and his followers arrived. Jan Michiel ran away in fear and only returned next morning when they left. His father had been beaten to death with *kieries*. Afrikaner's men took all the livestock and departed to the Great River whilst Jan Michiel sought refuge at Claas Bastard's kraal.¹⁶³

Jan Bloem also seems to have begun to play a more independent role around 1794 becoming, in his own right, a powerfully disruptive force amongst the societies around the eastern and middle sections of the Orange River. Pienaar supplied him with ammunition and Bloem in turn, built up a following of deracinated San and Khoikhoi, principally Korana, who were later identified as constituting the Springbok clan. Bloem and his followers began to raid other Korana groups and, in the 1790s, extended their sphere of operations to attack communities of Sotho-Tswana to the north. It was alleged by nineteenth century observers that he sent some of the cattle he had looted to Pienaar, in exchange for arms and ammunition. It was also alleged that Pienaar and the Afrikaners actually participated in these raids, the most famous of which was an attack against the BaThlaping at Kuruman in about 1794. In this attack many of the Tswana were shot and they lost all of their cattle, sheep and goats. At various times Bloem and the Springboks - who included many San adherents - lived at Khies, the Langeberg, Blinkklip and finally, Lekatlong. In 1799, however, Bloem's career came to an end. He and his "multi-ethnic unit" mounted an expedition against the BaNgwakete which failed and, on his return, Bloem was poisoned.¹⁶⁴

162. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Crimineele Verklaringen 1793-1796, Relas van Hottentot Piet Joubert, 4 Feb. 1794.

163. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Relas van Hottentot Jan Michiel, 26 Jan. 1796.

164. Lye, *Andrew Smith Journal*, 27 Feb 1835, p.178. "Our informant (an elderly San living with some Griqua) with many others of his fellow-countrymen, was invited, nay compelled to join in a conunando formed by John Bloom about 1794 for the purpose of attacking the Bituanas, and proceeded with it to the Kooroman where the Caffres were attacked, many of them shot, and all their cattle, sheep and goats taken, and with which the victors proceeded towards the colony". In Smith's *Diary* p.203, he writes: "This was the same Piet Pienaar who with Jan Bloom took the cattle from the Caffers at Langeberg. Africaner on that occasion was with him". See Du Bruyn,

In many ways Bloem's activities in the area east of the confluence of the Hartbeest and Orange River were a mirror image of Afrikaner's activities to the west. Like Afrikaner he established a group which survived the death of its founding father, presided over by his personal descendants. Like Afrikaner, too, he spread the "firearm zone" far to the north of the Orange River, destroying some groups and encouraging the coalition of others. It would be fascinating to know more about the reasons for the sudden appearance of about 300 "Hottentots, Coraanes" from the north into the Roggeveld district in May 1797. These people had no cattle with them and *Veldcornet* Visser feared "mischief" even though they stated that they wished to dwell with the Christians. The *landdrost* of Stellenbosch told Visser to deal tactfully with them and to tell them to go home which, presumably, they did. We can only speculate that their arrival, without cattle, had something to do with Bloem's raiding parties to the north but the records cannot confirm this.¹⁶⁵

Whilst Bloem's impact on the societies adjacent to the Orange River is not always clearly recorded the Afrikaners managed, in the last years of the eighteenth century, to make an indelible impression, not only on the lives of those they encountered, but also in the colonial records of the time. In the early nineteenth century travellers and missionaries in the northern frontier districts recorded further details, based on the folk memory of local residents, pertaining to the fearsome exploits of the Afrikaners. There is thus a good deal of evidence, not all of it consistent, which can be used to illuminate the violent severing of the ties between Pienaar and the Afrikaners. It was this event which inaugurated the Afrikaners' dominance of the Middle Orange River and heralded the arrival of a period of unprecedented banditry and terror.

At the beginning of March 1796 Michiel Bok, Pienaar's friend and Bloem's accomplice, was informed by his Khoikhoi drovers that a group of fourteen Khoisan robbers had stolen his cattle from his farm "Diepe Kloof" in the Hantam. Bok and his *knecht*, Barend, quickly mounted their horses and followed the spoor of the "schelms", sending word, meanwhile, to *Veldwagtmeester* Pienaar. The next day the Khoisan robbers were discovered on Spioen Kop with Bok's cattle but

"Oorlams", p.8; J. Campbell, *Travels*, p.378-379; Legassick, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the missionaries", pp.133-137; R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, 1842), p.214; Engelbrecht, *Korana*, pp.56-58.

165. CA, British Occupation (hereafter BO) 149, Ross to Van der Riet, 29 May 1797; CA, 1/STB 20/30, Van der Riet to Macartney, 26 May 1797. Lye, *Andrew Smith Journal*, 27 Feb. 1835, p.178 states that after Bloem's 1794 raid "The Corannas, who formed a very considerable proportion of this plundering band, with a small share of the booty which was ceded to them, preferred seeking a new abode to returning to the one they had left, and for that purpose directed their course up the Orange River, leaving Bloom and his own adherents to pursue their course in nearly an opposite direction to return to that part of the colony in which he resided".

nothing could be done until Pienaar arrived with help. He did not, however, arrive, so Bok and Barend rode to Pienaar's farm to see what it was that was detaining him. On their arrival at the farm they found the doors and windows shut. Bok ordered Barend to look in the wagon shed to see if Pienaar had perhaps trekked away somewhere, but the wagon was there. Bok must have sensed that something was wrong for instead of entering the house he rode around it and, about 1 000 yards away found two of Pienaar's children lying in the veld. Mietje had five wounds to her head but she was able to talk to Bok. Jacob had three wounds to his head and was beyond reason. In answer to Bok's questions the girl told him that Captain Afrikaner and some other Khoikhoi had shot dead their father and beaten to death their mother and sister. Bok and Barend picked up both children and put them on their horses. Still without entering the house they rode back to Bok's farm and then put the children on an ox wagon to take them to Frederik Straus's farm. Straus spread the news to Jacob Straus, Jacobus Forsters, Jan Goosen and two of Pienaar's sons - Arnoldus and Jan. Only the next day did Bok, Barend and the others return to Pienaar's farm. Pienaar's slave, Maart, told them that Afrikaner and some other Khoikhoi had shot dead his master, mishandled and beaten to death Pienaar's wife and beaten to death three of the children. Maart did not know that Mietje and Jacob had been found. But inside the house lay Pienaar, shot through the left breast. His wife and daughter, Leente, were also dead with various wounds to the head. The bodies were buried on the farm.¹⁶⁶

Why had the Afrikaners turned their guns and *kierries* on the Pienaar family? The most popular explanation, and one which is advanced by the majority of missionaries and travellers who wrote about the Afrikaners, was that Pienaar and his son Arnoldus were "in the habit of cohabiting with the wives" of Klaas Afrikaner's sons. Campbell reports that "suspicions, from some circumstances, rose in the minds of Afrikaner and his sons that their employer behaved improperly to their wives during their absence; and his sending them more frequently from home, confirmed their suspicions; they refused therefore to go any more on such expeditions".¹⁶⁷ In 1834 Andrew Smith recounted that it was not Klaas himself (who counselled against the deed) but his sons who had killed Pienaar. Klaas had fled from the farm before the murder but was overtaken by his sons in their flight from the Hantam. Together they all went to the Orange River.¹⁶⁸ Whether or not this was true, the incident does seem to have heralded the rise of Klaas' son Jager. As Burchell commented in 1811, the name "Africaander ... has been rendered more

166. CA, 1/STB 3/13, Michiel Bok, 9 Aug 1796.

167. Campbell, *Travels*, p.376.

168. Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, pp.202-203.

formidable by its collecting into a single history the deeds of two men equally worthless, the father and son".¹⁶⁹

Robert Moffat, a missionary who had a lot to do with Jager Afrikaner at a later date, confirms the above explanation and was, in fact, probably the originator of the tradition of Pienaar's sexual impropriety. Since his chief informant was Jager Afrikaner we should regard this story with caution as Jager was no doubt taking pains to convince the missionary that he had killed the Pienaars in an understandable outburst of rage after evidence of matrimonial trespass. Moffat added, as a reason for the murder, the fact that Pienaar ill-treated the Afrikaners.¹⁷⁰ Although we cannot, with certainty, dismiss the stories of Pienaar's improper attentions to the wives of his employees, the more likely explanation for the Afrikaners' resentment was that they were tired of being sent on commando by Pienaar. There is, at least, circumstantial evidence in support of this interpretation. In the years before Pienaar's appointment as *veldwagtmeester* the Afrikaners had certainly been kept busy on both official or quasi-official commandos and on illegal cattle raiding expeditions. Though they had benefited from these activities it was clear to them that they would benefit even more if Pienaar's controlling influence was removed. It is likely that after Pienaar's appointment to office, he was increasingly tempted to employ the Afrikaners on official (and hence less lucrative) commandos, particularly since the local farmers were so reluctant to undertake such duty themselves and since it was especially important for the new *veldwagtmeester* to convey an impression of vigorous success. Was it simply a coincidence that Pienaar was murdered shortly after receiving Bok's request to mount another commando? It is possible that Pienaar's orders to the Afrikaners to ride to Bok's assistance provoked them to rebel and rid themselves of their onerous servitude. In this respect Campbell's account of the reasons for the Afrikaners' rebellion is significant for it refers to both sexual anxiety and unhappiness over command duty. "Information having come to Picmaar (sic), that the Bushman had carried off some cattle from a boor belonging to the district over which he was Field Cornet, he, in his official character, commanded them to pursue the Bushmen, in order to recapture the cattle. This order they positively refused to obey, alleging that his only motive for sending them on such an expedition was, that they might be murdered, and he might thereby get possession of their wives".¹⁷¹

169. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.191.

170. Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, pp.73-76; Kirby, *Andrew Smith Diary*, Vol. 1, pp.202, 257. See also Du Bruyn, "Oorlams", pp.8-9; Franken, pp.213-234; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.173; Vol. II, pp.283-284.

171. Campbell, *Travels*, p.376.

As the Afrikaners fled to the Orange River it is possible that they killed another family of *trekboers*, the Van der Westhuisens, for this was the information received by the authorities in June 1796. *Veldwagtmeesters* Frans Lubbe, Johannes Karsten and Tilman Nieuwoud were ordered to lead a commando against the Afrikaner gang but since this only departed on 27 August 1796 it was far from being a hot pursuit operation. In fact, the commando allowed itself to be diverted from the task in hand in order to follow fresh San spoor. The trail led them over the Vis River and the Sak River, deep into Bushmanland. Needless to say there was no sign of the Afrikaners and, after killing a couple of San, the commando returned, beaten by thirst.¹⁷² Truth to tell there cannot have been much enthusiasm for a deadly confrontation with the armed, mounted and vastly experienced Afrikaner gang.

Subsequent commandos which were despatched to deal with them displayed a similar lack of application to the task and, as time passed, more disaffected Oorlams, Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" joined the Afrikaners ranks, or, at least, emulated their attitude of aggressive independence. Thus in February 1797, *Veldwagtmeester* Frans Lubbe asked permission to resign from an increasingly difficult job. Certain Khoikhoi in his district had guns which they claimed to have obtained from "de groot volk" and with which they threatened to shoot him, Lubbe, dead, on his own farm. Two "Bastaards" with guns had threatened the aged Hendrik Smit in his own house. Everywhere the Khoikhoi were behaving in such a manner that, if they were not checked soon "sal heet net so gaan asl bij Pienaar braaf geweers op saamel en dan namakwasland waar alle schelme heen gaad".¹⁷³

172. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Notes in front of volume, 7 June 1796; CA 1/STB 10/165, J. Karsten to Landdrost, 8 Oct. 1796.

173. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Lubbe to Landdrost, 14 Feb. 1797. "Things will turn out like they did with Pienaar; good guns will gather and go to Namaqualand where all the rogues go".

The North-Western Frontier Zone, 1796-1802

REVOLT IN NAMAQUALAND

A great many "schelme", or rogues, were indeed to be found in Namaqualand. But so too were many Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" who had been driven there by the increasing intolerance and persecution of whites in the rest of the colony. The recent outbreak of paranoia amongst the burghers of Swellendam, and the attacks on innocent Oorlam and Khoikhoi groups within the colony (which had been led by many of the local *veldwagtmeesters*), cannot have been reassuring for those who were not white farmers. Many independently-minded Khoikhoi or Oorlams therefore headed for the remote regions of Namaqualand where there still seemed to be the possibility of a life free from exploitation.

In the 1790s the colonial presence in Namaqualand seemed a lot less overbearing than elsewhere. True, white farmers had seized the choicest land, but there were comparatively few of them and many lived like the Namaqua themselves, in hemispheric huts of reed matting with very few signs of wealth and many of poverty. Indeed, not only did Namaqualand *trekboers* live like the Khoikhoi, they frequently lived with the Khoikhoi, sharing their huts with Namaqua women and their farms with other Namaqua families.¹ Namaqualand could not, however, remain immune to the sort of pressures being felt in the rest of the colony and, inevitably, processes of closure began to be felt here too. Tensions mounted. In part this was precipitated by the great influx of Oorlams or "Bastaards" into the area. Some of the white farmers began to feel threatened by this invasion, aware of the fact that they were convincingly outnumbered by groups of well-armed men who had no reason to love the colonial system. As land hunger grew in Namaqualand there was a movement into more marginal land and a displacement of weaker groups. Thus incoming Oorlam groups displaced Khoikhoi groups who in turn displaced the San. The result was growing conflict which the local upholders of government authority found all too easy to blame on, what was to them, the clearest threat, namely, armed Oorlams. In their attempts to assert colonial authority and make Namaqualand safe for the white man they succeeded in provoking a widespread revolt which, temporarily, united Khoikhoi, Oorlams and San against the local white farmers.

The first signs of the growing unrest in Namaqualand came in July 1796 when *Veldcornet* Johannes Cornelius van der Westhuysen wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch to describe the

1. See for instance Barrow's description of the colonists of Namaqualand in his *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.283-7.

events in that district.² Although details are sparse (since no copy of the letter has been found) the essentials may be gathered from a summary contained in a letter from General Craig (the British commander at the Cape) to *Landdrost* Van der Riet. Craig had been informed that:

the inhabitants of the Namaqua Country have been exposed to plunder and devastation by a party of lawless vagrants consisting of wild Bosjesmens and Hottentots, who have stolen their cattle, burnt their houses and forced them to retire as far as the Green River.³

Most surprisingly the leaders of this uprising were "Class and Peter Bastards" though frustratingly, nothing further is known about their involvement in this incident. We can only speculate that the murder of Pienaar and the flight of the Afrikaners had had a disturbing effect throughout the northern frontier zone. It is possible, particularly in the light of later development, that some over-zealous local official had attempted to curb the Barends so as to prevent them from becoming like the Afrikaners, that is, a threat to white dominance. All we can say with certainty, however, is that General Craig urged that every effort be made to settle the affair amicably. The *landdrost* was authorised to despatch a commando but Craig was insistent that a regular account of its proceedings be kept and that "no-one shall attempt to retain or enslave any of the men either Bosjemen or Hottentots that may be taken on this expedition".⁴ Unfortunately, no record of this commando's activities has survived although, presumably, it did take place for in August the *landdrost* commanded Van der Westhuyzen and a certain Andries Craaij of the Kamiesberg to raise the men in their district.⁵ Whatever had happened in 1796 did not, however, prevent a recurrence of unrest in Namaqualand.

In July 1797 an aggrieved colonist of the Kamiesberg, J.A. van den Heever, wrote to Andries Craaij in tones of bitter disrespect. He complained that he had been driven from his farm by the "Bossiemans", and unless a commando was despatched it would be pointless to return to the Kamiesberg since all he could look forward to was ruin and the death of his family. His farm had been burnt and if things continued this year as they had last year he and his family would have to leave. "I am extremely puzzled," continued Van den Heever, "that whilst you have been appointed as *veldwagmeester* by our government and also supplied with powder and shot to pacify the veld, that you find it so difficult to go on commando, sitting very still at the Beukeses (who provide you with your food) and scarcely ever stirring." The letter concluded with Van den

2. CA, LM 48, Letters Received from Landdrosts etc., 1796-1801, 8 July 1796, No. 72; 1 Aug. 1796, No 71.

3. CA, BO 147, Craig to Van der Riet, 5 Aug. 1796.

4. Ibid.

5. CA, I/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Craaij and Van der Westhuizen 10 Aug. 1796.

Heever threatening to report Craaij to the authorities if he failed to respond.⁶ Other Kamiesberg colonists had also been driven from their farms and Craaij was clearly under some pressure to react.⁷ In fact, he had already been very busy making the situation worse.

According to Craaij's own account he had been appointed as *veldwagtmeester* of Namaqualand on 26 October 1796 by *Landdrost* Van der Riet.⁸ Much of the subsequent turmoil in Namaqualand may be explained by the fact that the colonists of that region did not consider Craaij to be either a suitable or a legitimate appointment to that position. He had been born in the Netherlands and served his country as a sailor before arriving at the Cape. He was not, however, considered to be a burgher, perhaps because he had not been formally discharged from the service, even though his wages had been stopped. Quite when he arrived in the Kamiesberg is uncertain but he was not considered to be a Namaqualander by the locals and, indeed, prided himself on being a European. He had a loan-farm behind the Kamiesberg - "Tweefonteinen gelegen aan de Danze Kraal" - but the authorities were subsequently to dispute its legitimacy. All in all he was a strange choice for a *veldwagtmeester* and when officials of the Batavian government discussed his case in 1803 they concluded that his appointment, under the authority of the English government, had been "voorbeeldeloos"(unexampled).⁹

Whatever the qualities were which had elevated Craaij to a position of authority in the Kamiesberg they did not include good sense, nor an understanding of the situation in Namaqualand. Convinced that the government's order to prevent guns and ammunition from getting into Khoikhoi hands should be taken literally, Craaij proceeded to stir up a hornet's nest amongst the Namaqua of Little Namaqualand. Since November 1796 the newly appointed *veldwagtmeester* had been visiting Namaqua kraals and, with the help of other colonists (one of whom was Andries van Zijl), had been confiscating fire-arms. In one kraal of about thirty people Craaij took over six flint-locks and forced the inhabitants to move out of the area on pain of death.¹⁰ It is hardly surprising that by March 1797 the *veldwagtmeester* was complaining about

6. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Van den Heever to Craaij, 7 July 1797.

7. J.A. van der Merwe of Namaqualand wrote to complain that "murderers" had burnt down his farm "de twee fonteynen and prevented him from using his second farm "de silver fonteyn" for the past two years. CA, 1/STB 10/165, J. van der Merwe to Landdrost, 18 July 1798.

8. CA, Bataafse Republiek (henceforth BR) 276, Craaij to Commissioner General, 4 March 1803, pp.100-108.

9. CA, BR 276, pp.100-198; L. Bergh to Commissioner General, 11 May 1803, pp.105-7.

10. CA, 1/STB 10/9, Undated deposition of Namaqua Khoikhoi; bound in years 1800 but, from context, is the enclosure referred to by Barnard in letter to Van der Riet, CA, BO 150, 27 Oct. 1797: "I send to you the enclosed depositions of some Hottentots, who declare that they have been compelled to leave their kraal and their property in the Namacqua country on account of the ill treatment they have experienced from the *veldwagtmeester*, Andries Kraij".

the surly attitude of Khoikhoi in his district.¹¹ Nor that by October 1797 several Namaqua had in turn, complained to the governor about the ill treatment they had been receiving from Craaij.¹² Actions such as these were helping to create a climate of insecurity but it was not until December 1798 that matters came to a head.

Given the growing unrest in Namaqualand and the widespread rebelliousness of the Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and Oorlams throughout the frontier, the government renewed its efforts to record the names of those falling under colonial jurisdiction, but living in independent kraals, i.e. not working for white farmers. In August 1798, *Veldwagtmeester* Visser of the Roggeveld reported that kraal-dwelling Khoikhoi were refusing to give him their names.¹³ Opposition in Namaqualand, however, was far more dramatic. On 10 December 1798 *Veldcornet* van der Westhuysen of Little Namaqualand wrote a desperate letter to *Landdrost* van der Riet of Stellenbosch. When *Veldwagtmeester* Andries Craaij had instructed the kraal-dwelling Khoi of Little Namaqualand to allow him to record their names they had interpreted this in the most sinister - and for the authorities, unfortunate - light. The kraals had gathered together and launched an attack on five farms in order to plunder muskets, powder, shot and livestock. On the farm of the widow Nicolaas van der Westhuysen, the overseer, Hendrik Hiewes (or Hibert), had, it was reported, been killed and a total of twenty-one guns had been acquired by the Khoikhoi, as well as quantities of ammunition. This sudden uprising had been prompted by the belief that their names were being recorded preparatory to their being taken into slavery. The Khoikhoi reasoned that "diewyl sy een vry gebooren Natie syn, soo willen se sig lievers tot het laaste verdedigen en vlugten als een slaaf te syn".¹⁴

The *veldwagtmeester* and other *trekboers* had attempted to convince the Namaqua that they were mistaken, that they would remain free in the future and that the taking of names had nothing to do with enslavement, but to no avail. Van der Westhuysen had contemplated mounting a commando in order to subdue the troublemakers. On second thoughts, however, he had realised that, since the Khoikhoi numbered in their hundreds, and since the rebels, in their mountain retreats, sought to encourage the docile labourers of the *trekboers* to join their ranks, it would be most unwise to

11. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Craaij and Bezuidenhout to Landdrost, March 1797.

12. See note 10 above.

13. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Visser to Landdrost, 15 Aug. 1798.

14. CA, 1/STB 10/151, J.C. van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 10 Dec. 1798. "As long as they were a freeborn nation they would defend themselves to the last or flee rather than be made a slave". Heese says that the murder of Hendrik Hiewers (or Stiebert as he calls him) gave Soebatsfontein its name: "Die naam is aan die plek gegee omdat die knegt, Hendrik Stiebert, so ernstig om sy lewe gesmek het." "Namakwaland", p.21.

leave any farms unprotected. The Namaqua had threatened to drive the Europeans over the Olifants River and if the Khoikhoi servants were to join them there would be very few "Christians" left. The situation could deteriorate in the wink of an eye, cautioned Van der Westhuysen, whilst those farmers who had grouped together for greater security were in a precarious position as the veld could not support so much livestock in one place and water supplies were insufficient. He pleaded, therefore, for the immediate despatch of a powerful force to suppress the rebellion as there were too few men in Namaqualand to do so. Without such help, Van der Westhuisen concluded, it would be impossible to save "our women and children and our provisions ... our lives, yes, everything would be lost".¹⁵

The authorities responded to this plea on 20 December, promising that help was on its way and advising Van der Westhuysen, in the company of other *veldwagtmeesters*, to investigate the cause of the uprising.

A great deal of blame was already attaching itself to Craaij who, it was reported, had actually told the Namaqua that they would be enslaved. Another report maintained that Craaij's wife had spread the rumour. Doubts were now being expressed that Craaij was a *veldwagtmeester* (or *veldcornet*) at all since he had deceived the government about his credentials. It also seems that he had exceeded his instructions by trying to record the names of independent Khoikhoi, his brief having been to confine his enquiries to those Khoikhoi or "Bastaards" living with colonists.¹⁶ As letters were sent out to other *veldcornets* the British authorities took pains to impress upon them the need to be as merciful as possible; they should attempt to convince the rebels that they would not be enslaved and that they would avoid violence if they returned the stolen goods. Peaceful negotiations were the priority.¹⁷ General Dundas, determined to stamp the mark of British authority on the colony, issued the following stern statement to the *Landdrost* and *Heemraaden*.

I most sincerely wish that this unfortunate disturbance may be quelled without the effusion of any more human blood, or the exertion of that disgraceful degree of savage revenge, which too often has been found to exist, and in order to secure the future peace between such parties, it is my intention, with the utmost rigour to

15. CA, 1/STB 10/151, J.C. van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 10 Dec. 1798.

16. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Dundas, no date (1798); to Veldcornet from Landdrost, 20 Dec. 1798; to J.C. van der Westhuysen from Landdrost, 20 Dec. 1798; to J.C. van der Westhuysen from Landdrost, 24 Dec. 1798; to G.A. Smit from Landdrost, 31 Dec. 1798. There is some confusion surrounding the titles *veldcornet* and *veldwagtmeester* but many of the correspondents in this period used both terms quite indiscriminately. Van der Westhuysen was senior to Craaij but his area of authority was, strictly speaking, the Groene River whereas Craaij's was the Kamiesberg.

17. See note above.

punish every act of unwarranted violence that either party may have committed, and in the first instance, am to desire, that you will apprehend the veld cornet (sic) Andries Craaij, and all his accomplices, taking regular depositions of the facts, that a criminal prosecution may be commenced against him or any of them.¹⁸

By 4 January 1799 Van der Westhuysen, who was still in a state of considerable agitation, reported on the situation. The non-appearance of reinforcements and *veldwagtmeesters* from other districts was not reassuring.¹⁹ In response to his overtures of peace a group of more than fifty men, armed with at least fifteen guns, had arrived to parley. They had kept a cautious distance, agreeing to discuss matters only with Van der Westhuysen and Jan Engelbrecht. Van der Westhuysen's proposals had had some effect since three of the Oorlams - Witteboij Kamijs, his brother Cupido Kammijns, and Klaas Knoega²⁰ - agreed to meet him in eight days time at the Komberg in order to return the stolen guns and livestock. Part of the deal was that Knoegen and the Kamijs brothers should be allowed to keep three guns for self defence against the San. But Barend Goejeman - who had allegedly killed Hendrik Hiewers - and other "oorlamse bosjemans" would not hear of peace. After eight days, at the appointed place, the Kammijnses, Klaas Knoega, Links Namib, Gerrit Kwankwa and various others arrived. They handed over five guns, six of the worst horses, fourteen cattle and the same number of sheep, claiming that the rest of the livestock had got lost. Van der Westhuysen, however, had heard rumours to the contrary. He had also heard that there was a plot to kill a certain Esterhuysen, a plot to overrun the farms and a plot to drive away Jan van der Heever. Rumours also had it that the Oorlams who had kept the rendezvous were planning to leave because of the opposition of the others and because they had killed Barend Goejeman, the principle ringleader. Though this last rumour was not worth counting on, there were reports that the trouble makers were just biding their time, waiting until Cornelius Kok and his people had gone before making the next move.²¹

18. CA, 1/STB 10/9, Dundas to Landdrost and Heemraden, 22 Dec. 1798.

19. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 4 Jan. 1799.

20. Heese states (on what authority he does not say) that the Oorlams who made common cause with the San in 1799 were the Witboois. (Heese, "Namakwaland", p.27.) Whether he is basing this judgement on the name of the Oorlam leader -Wittebooi Kammijns - or on the fact that in the nineteenth century the Witteboois claimed to have lived between the Orange River and the Kamiesberg, is not clear. According to Heese (pp.74-75) towards the end of the eighteenth century the Witboois were under the leadership of Cupido Witbooi between Steinkop and Pella. As Van der Westhuysen's letter explains there was a Cupido who was Wittebooi's brother but, in 1799, he was called Cupido Kammijns and not Cupido (or Kido) Wittebooi. Nienaber explains (*Stamname*, pp. 630-639; 909-912) that the Khoikhoi name for the Witbooi's was Khowesen or Khobesen (which does not throw light on the problem) and that the term "Witbooi" was first used in 1828.

21. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 4 Jan. 1799.

Cornelius Kok, it seems, had convinced the Oorlam rebels to listen to Van der Westhuysen. He had been, acknowledged the *veldwagtmeester*, "een groote hulp".²² Those Khoikhoi or Oorlams who had been persuaded to negotiate had had their complaints written down and a copy of their statement was enclosed by Van der Westhuysen in his letter. The document is worth quoting in full since it reveals a great deal about the situation in Little Namaqualand at the end of the eighteenth century.

1. That they fled because their names were being recorded.
2. Piet Krabbeeb said that Andries Craaij's wife had said that the Englishmen would come and force them to make roads from one farm to another.
3. Gerrit Kwankwap said that Craaij had said that when Jan van der Westhuysen returned he would remove the Hottentots from beneath [van onder moet op brenge] to under the mountain [tot onder de berg].
4. Jacob's brother Klaas commanded both great and small to register their names but Craaij had lured him into this. But the baptised *bastaard* Jan Kloete arrived to warn the Hottentots not to go and register their names and Klaas said that those who did not would be killed.
5. Adriaan Nieukerk²³ said to Jantjie Namapij, "You are my slave," to which Namapij answered, "I will not be a slave but will be obedient to the Dutch."
6. Adriaan Nieukerk asked Jan Engelbrecht and his wife, in the presence of Engelbrecht's Hottentots: "Do you still pay your people?" Engelbrecht answered: "Yes." Whereupon Nieukerk said "I am not paying my people again and their time is not their own."
7. Adam Kok said that Andries Craaij gave him a message to give to Cornelius Kok, that he should leave the Great River or else he would come with 500 men from the Castle. If Cornelius did not come then Craaij would write to Jacobus Gideon Louw and other *veldwagtmeesters* of the Piketberg telling them to come [na onder] with powder and lead.²⁴

Behind these statements (which, when set down in writing, look scarcely credible) one may once again detect the influence of rumour. Rumour did not cause the Namaqualand rebellion but, just as in the Roggeveld rebellion of 1772, it did act as a trigger and mobiliser. It was the necessary ingredient in transforming widespread resentments against colonial authority into active insurgency. We should remember that Van der Westhuysen's account of the rebels' complaints

22. Ibid.

23. Adriaan van Niekerk, who lived far to the north of the majority of colonists in Little Namaqualand, vehemently denied these accusations, stating that J. van der Westhuysen had lied to the *landdrost*, falsely accusing him (Van Niekerk) of being a cause of the uprising. CA, 1/STB 10/152, P. van Niekerk to Landdrost, 3 Sept. 1799.

24. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 4 Jan. 1799.

was a written one and thus lacking in the immediacy and flexibility which were, no doubt, enjoyed by the rumours as they circulated in their original, oral form.

Despite the inadequacies of written representation it may be concluded from the above statements that, in 1799, both the white farmers and the Khoikhoi inhabitants of Little Namaqualand were feeling extremely insecure. If the boasting, threatening statements of Craaij and Nieukerk were aimed at convincing the local Khoikhoi that they were, in future, to be treated as slaves, then they succeeded in a spectacular fashion. The Khoikhoi found it all too easy to believe that they were about to be enslaved and the knowledge that there were new masters at the Cape, the English, increased the atmosphere of unpleasant expectation. The Khoikhoi fear of an impending deterioration in their status was obviously rooted in a present and perceptible reality. The *trekboers*, made nervous by the significant numbers of armed and independent Oorlams (of whom the Afrikaner gang was the most notorious but by no means the only example) were attempting to tighten up control over all Oorlam or Khoikhoi groups within the frontier zone. The fact that such measures stemmed from insecurity rather than strength is self evident, even without the bullying stupidity of Nieukerk and Craaij. Van der Westhuysen had good reason to hope that Cornelius Kok had not taken offence at Craaij's ill-considered attempts to intimidate him. If Kok had chosen to join the rebellion the position of whites in Namaqualand would have been untenable. As it was, Kok's presence had a calming influence on events and put the colonists in his debt.

On 19 February 1799 the commando which had been promised by the authorities arrived in the Kamiesberg.²⁵ It consisted of the *veldwagtmeesters* Gideon van Zijl, Gerrit Smit and Ernst Wolfaardt. With them they had eighteen whites, two "Bastaards" and one Khoikhoi. When joined to Van der Westhuisen's force of nineteen whites, eighteen "Bastaards" and seven Khoikhoi they constituted a commando of sixty-eight men, not counting the attendant cattle drivers. On 24 February contact was made with a group of San who had joined the Namaqua and Oorlam rebels. Two were shot as they fled to the farm of Jasper Cloete. The rest were tailed to a kloof at the Coussie or Buffels River where on 25 February it was apparent, a large gang was holed up. At this stage a man called Gerrit Owies the elder, stepped forward and asked Van der Westhuysen if he could approach the resisters and attempt to make peace.²⁶

25. The *veldwagtmeesters* of the Piketberg and Olifants River regions made all manner of excuses before they reluctantly rode off to help their bretheren in the Kamniesberg. One of the excuses was that Craaij was not a *veldwagtmeester*. See CA, 1/STB 10/152, G. Smit to Landdrost, 29 Dec. 1798; J.H. Lubbe Landdrost, 4 Jan. 1799; CA 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Lubbe, 9 Jan. 1799; Landdrost to Van der Westhuyzen, 16 Feb. 1799.

26. CA, 1/STB 10/151, J.C. van der Westshuyzen to Landdrost, 7 March, 1799; G. van Zijl to Landdrost, 20 March 1799; G. Smits to Landdrost (undated, probably 20 March 1799). Gerrit Owies or Owissie was most likely

Van der Westhuysen was the nominal leader of the commando, because the action was taking place within his district, but neither Van Zijl nor Smit regarded him very highly. The latter thought Van der Westhuysen to be incapable of command, never having led a commando before, whilst the former believed him to have been as responsible as Craaij had been in provoking unrest in Namaqualand.²⁷ Despite these misgivings the two *veldwagtmeesters* let Van der Westhuysen decide what to do. He had grave reservations concerning Owies' request saying that if the robbers had simply been Namaqua, he replied, then he himself would have approached them but, since there were many San amongst them, it was too dangerous. Owies, however, was insistent, arguing that if only he could speak to the girl Fytje he was certain that he could at least persuade the Namaqua to come out. This suggestion was at first refused but in the afternoon Owies was allowed to try. He took three or four "Bastaards" with him into the kloof but asked them to wait with the horses whilst he went ahead. One of the men was Klaas Bastard and he followed Owies quite closely to see what happened. Owies was busy putting his proposals to Fytje when some of the San began to appear from behind the rocks. One stabbed Owies in his back with an assegai, the point entered above the hip and came out of the navel. Klaas Bastard, without a gun, was forced to run back to the horses. Owies somehow managed to follow and the men retreated to the rest of the commando. Owies lingered painfully all day on 26 February and, according to Van der Westhuysen, died a really Christian death on the morning of the 27th. He forgave his murderer, pitied his poor wife and children and acknowledged, that, though he had not been commanded to do so, he had sought peace. "What must be must be. My time has come."²⁸

The peace initiative did not cease with Owies' death however. Another messenger was sent, a Khoikhoi, who shouted out the proposals from a safe distance. The terms were, basically, that the stolen guns and livestock should be surrendered and that the Khoikhoi rebels should return to their usual abodes. Some of the rebels accepted these conditions and a trickle of stolen booty was handed over to the *veldwagtmeesters*. Others, including the Kammijs brothers, Knoega and "een vermaarde schelm Bosjeman Kaymap" fled, with their followers and stolen guns to the Orange

to have been a baptized "Bastaard" since his surname is one which Heese ("Namakwaland", p.84) classifies as such. On 10 Dec. 1798 Van der Westhuyzen had written a letter in support of Owies whose farm "Lowies Fonteyn geliegen in de Klipfontyn", was too poorly provided with water and grazing for Owies to manage. The request was for access to be given to "de Klipfontyn en Varse Fontyn". CA, 1/STB 10/152, Van der Westhuysen to Van der Riet, 10 Dec. 1798. It is possible that Gerrit Owies was the same man as the "bastert hottentot Gerrit Ovie" who, in 1772, warned his master of an uprising of slaves and Khoikhoi labourers in the Swartland. See CA, CJ 403, pp.147-302.

27. CA, 1/STB 10/151, G. van Zijl to Landdrost, 20 March 1799; G. Smit to Landdrost, (undated, probably 20 March 1799). Others in Namaqualand shared this low opinion of Van der Westhuysen, see CA, 1/STB 10/152, P. van Niekerk to Landdrost, 3 Sept. 1799.

28. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 7 March 1799.

River. It was not possible to pursue these fugitives because of the scarcity of grazing and water. The horses were, moreover, exhausted after the long ride to Namaqualand from the south through an environment desiccated by the summer months. Those rebels who had agreed to keep the peace returned to their farms. To the eyes of Van der Westhuysen they seemed to be trustworthy as they were Namaqua from the Kamiesberg where Captain Wildschut lived. The "schelme" on the other hand, were "een vermenge Natie met de bosjemans en andere oorlamse".²⁹

Van Zijl's account of the commando was substantially the same as Van der Westhuysen's but in his investigation into the causes of the uprising he found Van der Westhuysen's brother, Willem, to bear equal responsibility with Craaij. When a Khoikhoi by the name of Links had heard from Craaij and his wife that the Namaqua were to be enslaved he went to Van der Westhuysen to seek clarification. The *veldwagtmeester* was not there but his brother informed him that even if he were to walk a path to Jan van der Westhuysen he would not get his rights. This confirmation of Craaij's story helped to provoke the uprising. Van Zijl also discovered that Esterhuysen had not been murdered by Barent Goejeman. What had happened was that he had been threatened with death and had fled. His livestock was stolen and shared out amongst the robbers who felt justified in their actions since Esterhuysen had stolen the stock from the Herero in the first place.³⁰

Further, evidence that the whites had not been blameless in causing widespread discontent amongst the Namaqua came from the Great Namaqua. They complained to Van Zijl that they were being prevented from using the water in their own grazing land. Van Zijl suggested that they complain to the *veldwagtmeesters* but this idea they rejected with contempt since the *veldwagtmeester* did nothing to help. Van Zijl promised to return in the winter and divide the veld between the claimants. It is unlikely that this measure, even if implemented, would have pleased the Great Namaqua who naturally would have preferred exclusive rights to their own land and resources.³¹ The episode reveals how extensive *trekboer* penetration of Great Namaqualand must have been by 1799 and how inadequate a barrier the Orange River was between the colonists and the Khoikhoi.

The rebellion in Namaqualand now seemed to be over and the situation of the white inhabitants more secure than before. Barrow visited the area in April 1799 and remarked that the Namaqua nation would probably be in a state of complete servitude within the space of a dozen years or so.

29. Ibid.

30. CA, 1/STB 10/151, G. van Zijl to Landdrost, 20 March 1799.

31. Ibid.

The colonists of the Kamiesberg, however, did not seem to be as infamous as he had expected and had the appearance of being "a harmless and honest set of people".³² Barrow did not allude to the recent rebellion in the district but did note that it was no longer possible for the Namaqua to find any game to hunt in the vicinity and that fear of the San prevented them from venturing further afield. He also noted the destructive addiction of the Namaqua to brandy, stating that they were willing to exchange a sheep for a bottle of the "noxious liquor".³³

Despite this picture of subservient dependence there were further outbreaks of violence in the area before the year's end. In August 1799 *Landdrost* Van der Riet was informed that another uprising of the Namaqua had occurred, "in so much that the Fieldcornet Van der Westhuizen has been obliged to march against them with a party of armed Burghers, who, after having killed some of them, to the number he states of ten, in a battle, have re-established peace".³⁴ Unfortunately there are no further details concerning this incident so we do not know why there had been a renewal of violence. We do know, however, that in June a number of Namaqua had been attacked by groups of San who had stolen their cattle. The Namaqua had taken refuge with the outlying farmer Adriaan van Niekerk and were according to him, in dire need.³⁵

Certain colonists had also suffered greatly from the upheavals in Namaqualand. In the peace negotiations following the revolt it had been stipulated that some of the Namaqua should pay cattle compensation to those farmers who had been impoverished by theft. Jasper Cloete and the widow Van der Westhuysen were amongst those who were mentioned as being destitute by 1800 but the guilty Khoikhoi had either fled or consumed any stolen cattle that they might have had, making it impossible to collect compensation.³⁶ Jasper Cloete never recovered his former status and his downward mobility was to have abiding repercussions.

In 1809 a government expedition to the mouth of the Orange River passed through Namaqualand and noted that there was a very old and poor settler by the name of Jasper Cloete living at

32. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.388.

33. Ibid., p.388, 392.

34. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Fraser, 10 Aug 1799. J.G. Louw of the Bokkeveld had been instructed to present in Namaqualand in August with a commando in order to march against "the murderer Africaaner". Perhaps this commando was used against the Namaqua instead. CA, 1/STB 10/152, J.G. Louw to J.C. Van der Westhuysen, 13 July 1799.

35. CA, 1/STB 10/152, P. van Niekerk to Landdrost, 3 Sept. 1799.

36. CA, 1/STB 10/150, J.C. van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 28 Feb. 1800. See also undated, unsigned letter in same volume (but from J.C. van der Westhuysen - late 1800). Other colonists who had lost a great deal were Willem Behrens, the widow Aggenbach and Adriaan van Nieuwkerk.

Komaggas.³⁷ Cloete, the expedition journalist observed, had once been extremely well off but had lost all he had due to "de voormalige roovery der hottentots". He now dwelt in a mat hut, without any help from Christians, in the company of "Bastaards".³⁸ Cloete, in fact, had sired many children with a "Bastaart hottentoten" and asked the *landdrost* of Tulbagh (who was part of the expedition) whether he and his "Bastaard" family could have permission to graze their livestock to the westwards, as far as was necessary, and within the limits of the Koussies River.³⁹ This permission was granted and Cloete's family thus became the founders of the present day community of Komaggas.

It is interesting to contrast this account of the formation of the Komaggas community with the traditions which the people of Komaggas came to believe in the twentieth century. The folk memory of the event, though different from the account recorded above, nonetheless points to a reality which the "Bastaard" descendants of Jasper Cloete came to experience at about the same time as Cloete's irreversible descent into non-white society: an irreversible decline in status. G. Meyer, a missionary who worked amongst the Steinkopf community at the beginning of the twentieth century, recorded a tradition that the original Khoikhoi chief of the Komaggas district had been a certain Captain Kurib (meaning "one who hides himself"). The founding father of the present Komaggas community, however, was Jasper Cloete who, according to Meyer's informants, was the son of a white farmer of the Kamiesberg and a Namaqua woman. This Jasper Cloete was probably a son of the Jasper Cloete of the historical record. Tradition has it that Jasper junior had three white half-brothers who despised him on account of his mixed descent and banished him from the Kamiesberg sometime in the 1790s. Jasper junior, who was married to a follower of Captain Kurib, had seven sons. He obtained permission from Kurib to settle at Komaggas and began to attract a number of Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" followers. In time he would become remembered as "ryk" (or "rich") Jasper Cloete.⁴⁰

37. The district of Komaggas derives its name from the Komaggas River, a tributary of the Buffels River. In the Nama language the most likely meaning of "Komaggas" is "a place of many wild olive trees". Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica*, A**, pp.748-749.

38. CA, Miscellaneous Documents (henceforth M) 76, Aanteekening der reise gehouden door de Caroo naar 't Klein Namakwaland, 7 Sept. 1807. This document is unsigned and undated but internal evidence suggests that it is a journal kept by someone in the party of the *Landdrost* of Tulbagh between 10 August 1809 and 30 September 1809. See chapter fourteen, p.473 below for more details.

39. Ibid. By 1809 the Koussies, or Buffels River was the northern boundary of the colony.

40. Meyer's account is quoted in E. Strassberger, *The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa: 1830-1950* (Cape Town, 1969), p.64.

Whatever else this story illustrates (and the reversals, additions and omissions of this account are most telling when compared to the account of the *landdrost* of Tulbagh) it suggests that after the 1790s "Bastaards" and Oorlams lost their birthright and were forced, by whites, from the better watered Kamiesberg region into the more marginal trekveld between Komaggas and the sea. The fact that such land was already occupied by Khoikhoi, such as Captain Kusib, made it necessary (at least in popular memory) for the new intruders to legitimate their appropriation of the land by gaining the permission of the indigenous owners - hence the reference, in Meyer's account, to Jasper Cloete junior marrying into the clan of Kusib. The importance of legitimisation of land claims is also apparent in the archival account where white Jasper Cloete senior obviously realised that he would have to gain colonial approval for his family's occupancy of Komaggas if they were to survive. After Cloete's death his "Bastaard" descendants would have to battle long and hard to protect their claims to Komaggas in an environment where "Bastaard" rights to land were not readily acknowledged.⁴¹ It is not, perhaps, surprising that in the process they would come to forget that they had once had a white forefather whose status had been little better than their own and who had been reduced to the direst poverty by the rebellion of 1798-1799.⁴²

The events of the rebellion had been a clear indication of the extent to which Khoikhoi, San and "Bastaard-Hottentots" were capable of making a common cause against the Dutch colonists. It is tempting to look for connections between the rebellion in Namaqualand and the Khoikhoi rebellion which broke out in the eastern Cape at roughly the same time. Although information and rumours doubtless passed from one area to another it would seem as though the two events were not otherwise connected. The Khoikhoi rebellion of the eastern Cape began in February-April 1799, some four months after the beginning of the uprising in Namaqualand. Whilst the Namaqualand revolt was quite clearly provoked because of fears of enslavement and the tactlessness of Craaij, the eastern Cape rebellion began as a response to the despatch of British and Khoikhoi troops to Graaff-Reinet. The troops had been sent in order to quell a Boer rebellion but the Khoikhoi of the eastern Cape saw this as an opportunity to rise against their hated masters.⁴³ There does not, therefore, appear to be a much in common between the two rebellions - apart from the fact that they occurred in a general context of Khoikhoi misery and in a climate of expectation that the advent of British government signified some sort of change, for better or for worse.

41. See N.G. Penn, "Land Rights of the People of Komaggas: An Historical Survey", (unpublished report for ESKOM, June 1993), pp.1-8.

42. For further details see Penn, "Land Rights of the People of Komaggas".

43. Newton-King and Malherbe, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803)* (Cape Town, 1981), pp.12-18.

The second and much smaller Namaqualand rebellion, of August 1799, should be seen in the context of the aftermath of the first rebellion. Part of this context was that San attacks, against both Khoikhoi and colonial farmers (and which had been a feature of Little Namaqualand for some time) began to intensify as the Namaqua trespassed into their territory. The disruption of the rebellion had caused a considerable displacement of rebels into San territory and the San responded by attacking Khoikhoi livestock. *Veldcornet* Van der Westhuysen only responded to Van Niekerk's request for a commando in July 1799 - a month after the San attacks which he had reported took place⁴⁴ - so it is not difficult to appreciate that many of the Little Namaqua would have been dangerously discontent around this time. Perhaps, therefore, it was a combination of San raiding, Khoikhoi hardship and indiscriminate commando activity which led to the uprising reported in August 1799.⁴⁵

MASTERS OF THE MIDDLE ORANGE: THE AFRIKANERS, 1797-1802

With the situation in Namaqualand seemingly under control the focus of attention shifted once more to the Afrikaner gang. The prospects of a successful Oorlam rebellion within the colony seemed slight, but would it be possible for anti-colonial Oorlams to live the life of their choice outside of the colony? The fate of the Afrikaners was no doubt of considerable interest to both colonists and colonial *drosters*, for if the Afrikaner gang managed to secure its independence there would be many anxious either to join them or to follow their example. In order to achieve a significant following, however, they had to establish their anti-colonial credentials and make the transition from banditry to social banditry. Though the Afrikaners certainly succeeded in demonstrating their hostility to colonial authority they never quite became a movement of social banditry. Instead of supporting, and enjoying the support of, the oppressed societies of the frontier zone in their struggle against colonial oppression, they became bandits pure and simple, terrorising and antagonising would-be supporters by their indiscriminate attacks on all and sundry. Eventually, it was wiser and kinder groups (like the Koks and Barends) who attracted large followings and the Afrikaners were forced to retreat to the barren wastes of southern Namibia, weaker and worse off than they had ever been.

For the time being, however, they were undisputed masters of the Middle Orange and their power ascendant. On 11 May 1799 they had begun a series of raids on farms in the Hantam with the

44. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Van Niekerk to Landdrost, 3 Sept. 1799.

45. San attacks on Dutch and Khoikhoi in Namaqualand continued. See CA, 1/STB 10/150, J.C. van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 17 Nov. 1799.

intention of obtaining guns, powder, shot, livestock and provisions. Their first victims were Jacobus Engelbrecht and his servant, the "Bastaard" Jan Tieltias. They were murdered and their muskets and two wagons, twelve hundred sheep and three hundred cattle were stolen. On 14 May the Afrikaners killed a Khoikhoi servant of Gert du Toit, stealing several wagons and the livestock of the widow of Pieter Theron. These numbered 2500 sheep and goats, 146 cattle and 3 horses. The family of Johannes Botha was also attacked and robbed whilst they were travelling on wagons with all their stock and possessions. They lost everything except their lives and the clothes they had on. According to eye witnesses the Afrikaner gang was 100 strong, and included some San. The commando that Johannes van Wyk mounted to pursue the robbers on 17 May failed to catch up with them due to the fatigue of the horses and the great unwillingness of the commando members. The Afrikaners returned to the Orange River with a rich booty (2 wagons, 3 700 sheep and goats, 46 cattle, 8 horses, 13 guns) and all that Van Wyk could do was appeal for reinforcements from all of the *veldwagtmeesters* of the western Cape as well as for large quantities of powder and shot.⁴⁶

Landdrost Van der Riet - who described Afrikaner as the "alom bekende Schurk en moordenaar...die beryds lange over zyne verschyde bedreevene misdaade die dood verdiend heefe"⁴⁷- began to make plans for a commando against the Afrikaner gang and Governor Dundas recommended putting a price on Afrikaner's head. He added, no doubt with the events of 1793 in mind, that he hoped "the facts are properly ascertained; and that these complaints from that distant country do not originate with any view of committing predatory hostility against the Hottentots or Boschmen".⁴⁸ A huge commando of 137 men attempted to reckon with the Afrikaners in August and September 1799, but could not cross Bushmanland, owing to the drought. It contented itself with attacking various San kraals and then disbanded.⁴⁹

It cannot be stated with any certainty whether the Afrikaners' attacks on the Hantam had had a direct influence on events in Namaqualand but certain evidence that the uprisings of colonial

46. CA, 1/STB 10/151, J. van Wijk to Landdrost, 4 June 1799; CA, 1/STB 10/150, J. J. Bota to Landdrost, 26 Feb. 1800; CA, LM 48, (Vol. BO 22), No. 68, 16 June 1799, No. 69, 21 June 1799, No. 70, 11 May 1799, No. 71, no date; G.M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony* Vol. 2, 1796-1799, pp.423-438.

47. "The widely known scoundrel and murderer ... who has long deserved death for the various crimes he has committed". CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Dundas, 21 June 1799.

48. CA, BO 153, Letter Book, Dundas to Van der Riet, 22 June 1799; CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to Dundas, 21 June 1799.

49. CA, 1/STB 10/152, L.J. Erasmus and others to Landdrost, 28 July, 1799; List of men on commando against Afrikaner, 2 Aug. 1799; Commando Journal of G.A. Van Wijk; Commando Journal of J.G. Louw; E. Wolfaart to Landdrost, 1 Sept. 1799; A. Mouton to Landdrost 1 Sept. 1799; A Commando Journal from Piketberg.

Khoikhoi were inspired by Afrikaner's example was provided by *Veldcornet* J.G. Louw of the Onder Bokkeveld. Louw informed Van der Riet in July 1799 that he had discovered a conspiracy amongst the local Khoikhoi to murder all the whites in the Bokkeveld, steal the horses and muskets, and depart with all of the Khoikhoi to join Afrikaner. Louw had been informed of the plot by his slave (since all the slaves had been invited to join in) "whereupon the said vagabonds had endeavoured to save themselves by flight", but Louw "pursued and properly killed all of them as they refused to surrender and defended themselves to the last extremity".⁵⁰

There was indeed a real danger that the longer Afrikaner remained unchecked, the stronger his band would become as various malcontents, attracted by his success, made their way to him. This does not mean that all of the disparate groups who felt at home along or about the Orange River welcomed the Afrikaners as saviours. On the contrary, a number of groups perceived the Afrikaners to be either dangerous predators or dangerous rivals and a proportion of the Afrikaners' time was therefore occupied in dealing with them.

One such group was that which adhered to the Xhosa leader Zonie or Danster.⁵¹ They had left the lands beyond the Fish River in the Eastern Cape around 1795 and, some time after this, crossed beyond the Sneeu Berg to settle along the banks of the Orange River. By 1797 Danster had entered the service of white colonists in the Roggeveld district, driven to this by a combination of the severity of natural conditions on the Orange River, and the continuous attacks from strong San clans in the area. It would be interesting to know whether Danster's arrival in the Roggeveld had anything to do with the arrival of "300 Hottentot Coraanes" looking for work in May 1797.⁵² The first recorded mention of Danster's name was in October 1797 when Gerrit Maritz of the Roggeveld complained that Floris Visser, the *veldwagtmeester* had shot "de Kaffers Capitijns", Danster, with grape-shot rather than allowing him to return to his "woon platsen". Danster had been working for Visser in the winter but Visser was reluctant to release him from service. Maritz thought that such behaviour was guaranteed to bring down the vengeance of "der Kaffers want het is een wrekende naasic" and two of Danster's followers, "Swarte Booij" and "April" had already sworn as much if Danster died.⁵³

50. CA, 1/STB 10/152, J.G. Louw to Landdrost, 13 July 1799; W.A. Nel and J.P. Carsten to Landdrost, 13 July 1799; Theal, *Records*, Vol. 2, p.46.

51. For Xhosa groups in the Orange River frontier zone see P. Kallaway "Danster and the Xhosa of the Gariep: Towards a Political Economy of the Cape Frontier 1790-1820", *African Studies*, 41, 1 (1982), pp.143-60 and E. Anderson, *A History of the Xhosa of the Northern Cape 1795-1879* (Cape Town, 1985).

52. See p.399 below.

53. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Maritz to Landdrost, 16 Oct. 1797.

Visser claimed that he had been obliged to fire in order to defend himself from Danster and his followers, from whom he wished to take a gun. On orders from the *Landdrost* Visser released Danster who returned to the Orange River, "a part of the country which was become an asylum for all the rabble that were for any reason outcasts from the colony".⁵⁴ Here he fell in with Afrikaner.⁵⁵ According to Lichtenstein who encountered Danster with "a numerous horde of Caffirs" at the Orange River in 1803:

with this man, Danster by degrees entered into so strong a friendship, that a plan was in agitation to unite their two hordes; when suddenly, in the absence of most of the Caffers, the few who remained were slaughtered by Africaner's band, and the women and children were carried away. Danster, too weak to avenge himself sought at last to set the prisoners at liberty, in which he succeeded one dark night, when the robbers were asleep, after having celebrated a festival for some new victory, with dancing and brandy. He stole to the place, and got the women again into his power, but was betrayed too soon, before he was able to put Africaner, with his companions, to death as they slept; he was even obliged to leave the children in the power of this terrible Hottentot.⁵⁶

That the Afrikaners had murdered most of Danster's followers is confirmed by a reference in a letter from Floris Visser in September 1799.⁵⁷ From the same letter we learn that Danster sought refuge for a time with "een troep Groote Riviers Basterds en Hottentotten op behoorende onder Cornelis Kok".⁵⁸ By the time of his encounter with Lichtenstein, Danster was leader of a large group of Xhosa who had emigrated, at an earlier period, to the Orange River. This group, over a hundred strong, eked out an existence as hunters, stock raisers and raiders. Their life was punctuated by perpetual conflicts with the San and Korana and Danster's accounts of "the murderous deeds which he had committed" among these people, and the "many more which he projected" chilled Lichtenstein with horror.⁵⁹ By 1799 Danster had, however, ceased to be a threat to the Afrikaners and they were at liberty to terrorise other habitués of the river.

Amongst such people were the followers of the Barend brothers, Klaas and Piet. There had obviously been a parting of the ways between the Barends and the Afrikaners since the days when they had both stayed with Petrus Pienaar. On one occasion the Barends had succoured a survivor

54. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Visser to Landdrost, 17 Nov. 1797. Quotation from Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. II, p.283.

55. CA, 1/STB 10/152, J. Kruger to Landdrost, 27 Aug. 1799: "dat de Capiteyn Danser met syn kraal agter legt, en een gedeelte van deese kraal is afgebrooken, en sijn naar de Moordenaarkraal gegaan (dit is de Kraal die Pienaar vermoord heeft).

56. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. II p.284.

57. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Visser to Landdrost, 28 Sept. 1799.

58. Ibid.

59. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. II p.285.

of one of Afrikaner's attacks and for some time the brothers had identified themselves rather more closely with the colonial order than the Afrikaners. In October 1799 Floris Visser of the Roggeveld was visited by Piet and Klaas who had ridden from the Orange River with a group of "Kraane [Korana] hottentotte en als ook eenige oor lamsche hottentotten en twee kaffers".⁶⁰ They requested Visser to give them help against Afrikaner and his kraal since Afrikaner had already attacked them twice and stolen their livestock. Afrikaner had said to the Barends that he would continue to attack them until they joined with him for the purpose of exterminating the Christians. It was by similar threats that Afrikaner had managed to attract a large following to himself and unless he was resisted it would not be long before it was impossible to retain either "vee of volk". The Afrikaners had already killed some of the Barends' followers, as well as many of the blacks, and taken all of their livestock. The Barends' cautioned that any commando which might be sent to deal with the Afrikaners - and Visser earnestly requested immediate help - would have to employ artillery because they had surrounded their kraal with stones.⁶¹ The Barends also advised that if a commando were despatched it should approach the Afrikaners using the route which the Barends had used. If it went the other way (presumably to the west) it would have to go past two San kraals, about three days journey from the Afrikaner kraal, which had joined Afrikaner; this would not be advisable. Afrikaner had also threatened to visit the Middle Roggeveld with a commando towards the end of summer.⁶²

Here was evidence that the Afrikaners were being actively assisted by San auxiliaries who shared a hatred for the colonists. This was a far cry from the days when the Afrikaners had killed 113 on one commando. We should note, without being unduly cynical, that since the San had no possessions there was little incentive for the Afrikaners to attack them. The government was no longer about to reward the Afrikaners for slaughtering San and would not even replace the ammunition which would be expended in the process. If their allegiance could be cheaply bought the San were far more valuable as friends than as foes.

60. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Visser to Landdrost, 27 Oct. 1799. A. Smith, *Diary*, Vol. II, p.258-261, records a tradition that the Barends were approached by some colonists who offered them twenty guns, fifty pounds of powder and two hundred weight of lead if they would attack Afrikaner. I have not come across archival evidence to support this but Smith's descriptions of epic struggles between Titus Afrikaner and Klaas (or Nicolas) Barend make exciting reading.

61. I would suggest that this fortified kraal could not be the one at Schans Vlakte in the Karasburg district of Namibia - a theory favoured by K. Dierks, "///Khanx!nas-Schans Vlakte: Oldest Urban Settlement in Namibia", *In Formation*, 1987/1988, Vol. 1, pp.5-32. At this stage of their career the Afrikaners were operating along the middle Orange - as all the available evidence suggests - and the Barends were hardly likely to flee to a Roggeveld *veldwagmeester* if they wanted a commando launched against a Karasburg kraal, nearly 600 kilometres from the Roggeveld as the crow flies. Namaqualand was half this distance from Schans Vlakte.

62. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Visser to Landdrost, 27 Oct. 1799.

The presence of a large group of San, known as the "Groot Kraal", was of some concern to Visser. They lived along the river to the north of the Roggeveld district. In September 1799 these San had attacked Cornelius Kok's following in an "unearthly" manner, killing some of them and stealing their possessions. The Koks had fled to the newly-established mission station of Blydvooruitsigt where they had fortunately encountered the object of their quest, namely Floris Visser. Surprisingly enough it was Danster (who at that stage was a fugitive amongst the Koks), who had recommended that they approach Visser for help. Perhaps his earlier treatment at Visser's hands had convinced Danster that here was a fit man to deal with the Afrikaners; or perhaps it was simply the fact that Floris Visser was the nearest *veldwagtmeester* to the eastern section of the Middle Orange River. At any rate Visser, who had a strong interest in the Blydvooruitsigt mission, was convinced that the "Groot Kraal" constituted a significant threat to the peaceful propagation of evangelical Christianity in the African interior.⁶³ These fears were reinforced after the missionaries had received three warnings, between September and December 1799, that the "Groot Kraal" was going to murder them. Even more disturbing was news from the Koks and from more friendly San that the "Groot Kraal" itself was in cahoots with Afrikaner.⁶⁴

Visser had tried to raise a commando against the Afrikaners in December but had been defeated in his intentions by the opposition of Gerrit Maritz, *veldcornet* of the Middle Roggeveld. Maritz and his men expressed the strongest unwillingness to go on commando in December, just when the harvest had to be reaped. They also pointed out that they were weak whilst Afrikaner was strong. Should they provoke him - who had never attacked their district - he would simply retaliate and ravage the district. Visser, in the meantime, received news from the Barend brothers that Afrikaner had received further reinforcements of guns and men. They also told him that Afrikaner was sending a Khoikhoi by the name of Cobus Booij to the Cape in order to buy powder and shot.⁶⁵

Cobus Booij had been one of Visagie's followers. He had, in fact, set out on his mission weeks before Visser received his information and reached Namaqualand by 17 November 1799. He was, ostensibly, making his way to Stellenbosch to sue for peace for Afrikaner. His ungentele escort was Cornelius Kok, who was on his way to Stellenbosch with five wagons, eighty elephant tusks and fifty-three followers, both male and female. One of these was a member of the Barends'

63. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Visser to Landdrost, 28 Sept. 1799; Visser to Landdrost, 4 Dec. 1799; see chapter 11 above and Penn, "The /Xam and the Colony".

64. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Visser to Landdrost, 4 Dec. 1799.

65. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Maritz to Landdrost, 26 Nov. 1799; Visser to Landdrost, 4 Dec. 1799.

community, Cupido Joseph, who was desirous of seeking pardon (for some unspecified crime) from the *landdrost*. The *landdrost* of Stellenbosch was satisfied that Booij had not lived in the kraal of Afrikaner but that he had been ordered to take a message to Cape Town when Afrikaner had heard that he was making a journey there.⁶⁶

Governor Younge was, not surprisingly, most suspicious of Afrikaner's motives for peace. He was, in fact, advised by the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch not to pardon Afrikaner but attempt to capture him by cunning. Kok, too, secretly offered to help capture him, dead or alive, provided he was given some gunpowder, and the *landdrost* was prepared to countenance this request "as the said Kok is a well disposed Hottentot".⁶⁷

Kobus Booij was sent northwards in January with orders to instruct Afrikaner that he would be given safe conduct if he came to the Cape to face the charges against him. This offer was conditional on responding within six months of the receipt of the information. The bait which was dangled before him was, however, scarcely tempting, for it amounted to no more than a promise that his request for pardon would be considered as favourably as possible.⁶⁸ Booij delivered the message to Afrikaner and it is likely that he returned to the Cape in November 1800 with a favourable response, for on the 12th of that month the offer of safe conduct was reiterated. In addition, Cobus Booij, in recognition, perhaps, of his services as a go-between, was given permission to occupy a place called "Klipfontein" in the Namaqua's country.⁶⁹

In the meantime, Floris Visser had reported to *Landdrost* Van der Riet that he had received news from some of the "Groot Riviers bastaarde" that Afrikaner was still lying low. Despite this reassuring lack of incident, the "Bastaards" felt constrained to ask Visser that "geen oorlam se hottentot na de groot rivier mogt gaan wand dat de sulks daar geen goed doet". They also reminded the authorities that they had not yet recovered the stock which Afrikaner had stolen from them, and that this fact should be borne in mind if Afrikaner was ever involved in peace negotiations.⁷⁰ It is of some interest to note that the respectable "Groot Riviers bastaarde" made a clear distinction between themselves and the "oorlam se hottentot", a reminder that we should not

66. CA, 1/STB 10/150, J. C. van der Westhuyzen to Landdrost, 17 Nov. 1799, CA, BO 55, No. 119, Van der Riet to Barnard, 28 Dec. 1799; CA 1/STB 10/150, Maree to Landdrost, 24 Dec. 1799.

67. CA, BO 55, No. 119, Van der Riet to Barnard, 28 Dec. 1799; Theal, *Records* Vol. 5, p. 66.

68. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost to [?], 14 Jan. 1800, two letters; Barnard to Landdrost, undated.

69. CA, BO 162, 12 Nov. 1800.

70. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Visser to Landdrost, 11 March 1800.

use the term Oorlam indiscriminately and that "Bastaards" considered themselves to be superior to Oorlams.

Prospects of a truce diminished even further when, after the theft of stock in the Onder Bokkeveld in April 1800, the spoor of horses and wagons was discovered. Since *Veldwagtmeester* J.G. Louw was confident that no San had horses he was convinced that the Afrikaner gang was abroad. Khoikhoi informants claimed to have seen Afrikaner at the Vis River whilst the insecurity of the district was greatly increased by the absence of Cornelius Kok. Louw attempted to follow the Afrikaners to the Orange River but since he could muster only eight men, due to the unwillingness of others to serve, he felt it pointless to go beyond the Hartebest River. Louw explained to the *landdrost* that it would have been impossible to rely on Khoikhoi commando members if the commando had in fact reached the Orange River and that to proceed would have been to court disaster.⁷¹

It is doubtful whether Afrikaner ever felt seriously tempted to throw himself on the mercy of the colonial governor and it is far more likely that he was using Booij (with his guarantee of safe conduct) as his agent within the colony. One of the most vital functions that such an agent could fulfil was, as the government had suspected from the first, the procurement of gun powder and Booij was, in fact, caught red-handed trying to smuggle some out of the colony in April 1802. *Veldcornet* Gideon Roussouw, acting on the orders of the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch (who had, in turn, been tipped off about Booij's real mission) detained Booij, together with his seven children and some followers, behind the Piketberg. On Booij's ox-drawn cart was a bag of rice, and, hidden within it, a smaller bag containing four pounds of gunpowder, destined, no doubt, for "the vagabond Africaander". Booij seems to have been able to convince *Veldcornet* Roussouw to release him though it is not clear whether the authorities believed him to be on a peace mission nearly a year after the deadline for negotiations had lapsed.⁷²

The Afrikaners had not, in the meantime, been inactive. Whilst the severe drought of 1800 provided arid protection from commandos from the south it also obliged the Afrikaners to confine their raiding activities to the vicinity of the Orange River. There could be no quick forays across Bushmanland in order to seize colonial cattle if there was no water along the way. The official expedition which the Cape government sent to the Tlhaping in 1800-1801, in order to attempt to

71. CA, 1/STB 10/150, J. G. Louw to Landdrost, 26 April 1800; J. van Wijk to Landdrost, 5 May 1800; J.G. Louw to Landdrost, 31 May 1800.

72. CA, BO 60, Van der Riet to Dundas, 13 May 1802; CA, BO 162, 28 April 1802.

barter cattle from the Tswana, did not only encounter considerable difficulties in finding water for its purposes, it also encountered so much evidence of recent atrocities, committed by Afrikaners along the river, that it decided, as part of its broader mission, "that everything should be done that was possible for the good of the colony", to attack the bandits.⁷³

According to William Somerville, who, along with Truter, was one of the leaders of the government expedition, the Afrikaners had, by late 1800, become masters of the Middle Orange, keeping "the whole extent of the Garipe for 500 miles in terror". They had swept large numbers of "Bastaards", Einiqua and Korana as far east as present day Prieska whilst to the west the Great Namaqua continued to suffer periodic raids. "A Corporal of Kocks Kraal ... informed us that the head of the bandit formerly mentioned, Africaander, had just come home from a plundering expedition having robbed some Hordes of Namaquas."⁷⁴

On its return from the Tswana in February the Truter-Somerville expedition found a number of Afrikaner's surviving victims willing to join in a concerted attack on the robber band. These included Danster's remaining followers, who had been encountered at the ford called Kheis, as well as diverse groups of Korana and Namaqua who had suffered at his hands. Also "A party of bastards from Reed fountain all of whom had been plundered by Africaner and some of their relations murdered, joined us ... with joy and gratitude offered any assistance in catching him". According to Somerville:

No Kora who had anything has escaped. The numerous tribes of the Namaqua are reduced to misery and those who saved their lives have fled far beyond these limits for safety. The murders committed by him are many - he cut his first wife's throat - trampled the second to death - shot his master and his family. His gang of Sons and adherents have cut off the noses of the Namaqua Women - and suffered them to bleed to death - fastened infants upon ant hills to be devoured alive by these insects.⁷⁵

Further willing recruits were found amongst the followers of Cornelius Kok who, at this stage, were living on the south side of the river some eight to ten days downstream from Aakop or Rietfontein.

The Koks were under the temporary command of Cornelius's son, Adam Kok II, because Cornelius was away on business. Although the Koks had not themselves been attacked by the

73. E. and F. Bradlow, (eds.), *William Somerville's narrative of his journeys to the Eastern Cape Frontier and to Lattakoe 1799-1802*, (Cape Town, 1979) p.170.

74. E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.97, 176.

75. *Ibid.*, pp.176-178.

Afrikaners they were anxious to put an end to the miserable state of apprehension they were under of being murdered or robbed by their neighbour at his earliest convenience. They had, indeed, a lot to lose for it is estimated that their flock of sheep numbered 25 000 at this time. Cornelius Kok had, to an extent thus far, benefited from the excesses of the Afrikaners. He had been able to employ poverty-stricken refugees as shepherds, giving them half the natural increase of those of his flocks which they were tending, thereby winning their affection and insuring himself "against any theft from them who otherwise might have been forced, through poverty, to steal his sheep".⁷⁶

It may thus be seen that the Afrikaners' policy of indiscriminate attack and unselective robbery had succeeded in uniting a powerful and diverse alliance against them. When information was received that the Afrikaners were camped a mere two days journey downstream from the Koks' kraal a large party of over forty men set out to surprise them. During the night of 1 February an attack was launched on the robbers. It would seem that the major objective of the participants was not so much to endanger their lives or those of the Afrikaners, but to recapture some cattle. Thirty or forty cattle were, in fact, retrieved (some of which had previously belonged to members of the attacking force). The next day, inspired with new zeal, the colonial party continued its pursuit of the Afrikaners. They were rewarded by capturing over 300 head of cattle and a few sheep. The Afrikaners, however, had been able to take refuge on an island in the middle of the river in the vicinity of the Augrabies falls. Here, thanks to a rising water level, they become inaccessible to their pursuers but the hotness of the chase may be gauged by the fact that, in addition to losing so much cattle, they had also lost two muskets.⁷⁷ It was the worst set back the Afrikaners had suffered since their clash with the Visagies in 1793. Their defeat was also a sign that the balance of power along the Orange River was gradually shifting.

Part of the reason for this ignominious retreat, as we have already mentioned, was that the Afrikaners had failed to win any local supporters. Instead of a system of defensive alliances with other powerful neighbouring groups the Afrikaners had chosen to antagonise everyone. Their defeat may also be attributed to the fact that the Afrikaners had been reduced to firing copper bullets (having run out of lead) with feeble charges (having run short of gunpowder). This was an indication that raiding and robbery had not been an adequate solution to the problem of keeping

76. Ibid., p.216, 177.

77. Ibid., p.216; Theal, *Records*, Vol. 4 p.408.

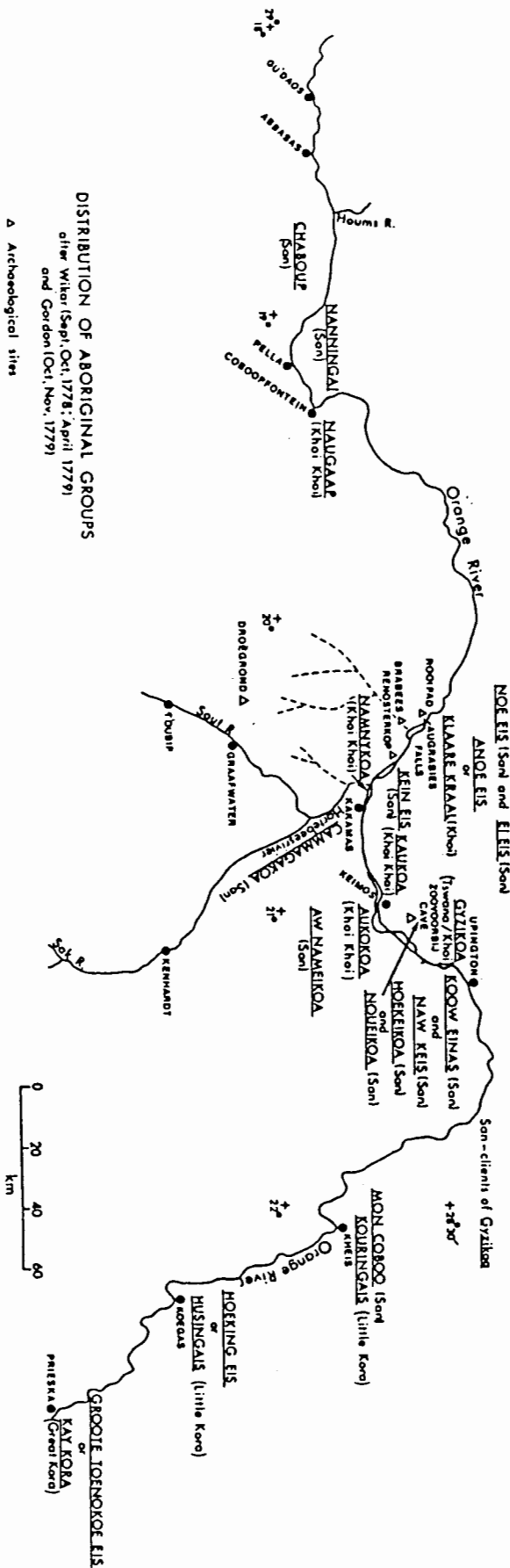
the gang supplied with the most crucial of all colonial commodities - ammunition.⁷⁸ The Koks and the Barends, on the other hand, seemed to have been well-supplied with guns and ammunition and the Afrikaners must have asked themselves, as bullets whistled about them, how they had achieved this happy state of affairs. It is evident that Jager Afrikaner had some idea that the good fortune of the Koks and Barends arose from their acceptance of Christianity and their association with missionaries for at the height of the battle he had called out, with terrible curses and threats: "I know very well that the Koks and Bastards plot together, and were great sinners in attacking him, as he was instructed and had repented, and that they would be sure they would not pass another quiet night with their families".⁷⁹

The interesting point about the above outburst is not so much its contradictory mixture of piety and revenge but the fact that it indicates that not even the Afrikaners had remained immune to the evangelical influences which were beginning to penetrate the frontier zone. The presence of missionaries had begun to make itself felt even along the Orange River and those societies which had accepted their message, like the Koks and Barends, seemed (to a sinner like Afrikaner), to have derived immeasurable benefits, both spiritual and material, from their submission. It is time to consider the missionary influence on the northern Cape frontier zone more carefully.

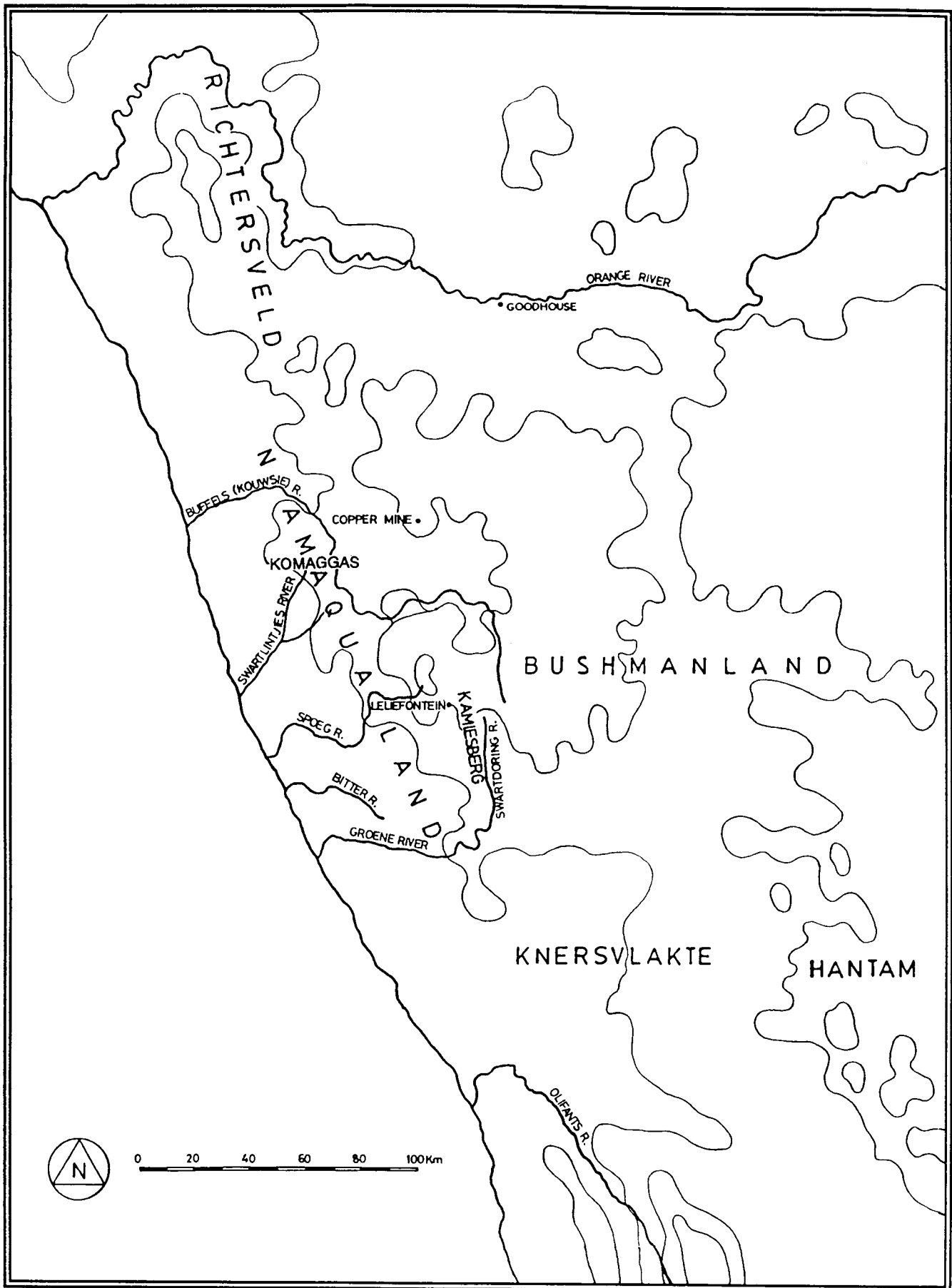
78. There was, according to *Veldcornet* Van der Westhuysen of Namaqualand, a substantial trade in firearms taking place, illegally, in his district. In August 1801 he specifically complained about a man called David Kooker who was selling firearms to the Namaqua. There were, however, other nameless traders whom he mentioned as bringing wagon loads of firearms into Namaqualand, as well as many Namaqua who returned from the south with their own guns and ammunition. CA, I/STB 10/153, Van der Westhuysen to Landdrost, 27 Aug. 1801.

79. Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, p.408; E. and F. Bradlow (eds.), *Somerville*, p. 216.

KHOISAN SOCIETIES OF THE ORANGE RIVER, 1779



Source: Andrew Smith, (ed), *Einiqualand*.



NAMAQUALAND AND THE NORTH-WESTERN CAPE

Part IV
"Civilising" the San, 1790-c.1815

Was not John the Baptist a Bushman?

John Philip,
Researches in South Africa

Peace Proposals and Pacification, 1790-1799

THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE SAN

In September 1795 the Cape authorities surrendered to a British army of occupation. This change of government was to have inevitable repercussions on the colony's frontiers, however distant or unamenable to administrative interference the societies of these regions may have been. Despite Britain's reluctance to become involved in embroilments within the Cape interior there were certain developments which could not be ignored by a sovereign power. The new government soon exerted an influence on the Cape's frontier zones which far surpassed the feeble interventions of the senescent VOC. Indeed, the British invasion relieved the Company officials from having to cope with a situation which was becoming, if it was not already, quite unmanageable.¹ The British arrival coincided with burgher rebellions in Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet, rebellions which were, *inter alia*, caused by the colonists' dissatisfaction with the Company's inability to engineer conclusive defeats of the San and the Xhosa. Though the British commander, General Craig, was able to bring the rebels to obedience by the simple expedient of stopping their supply of ammunition, the causes of frontier insecurity remained. Because of the economic importance of the administrative district of Graaff-Reinet to the rest of the colony - it was the principal supplier of meat - the British were obliged to expend more and more energy in an attempt to bring peace and stability to the eastern frontier. Before the time came for their temporary departure in 1803 they had had to exert a considerable amount of armed force, to check the ascendancy of the frontier Xhosa, crush a Khoikhoi uprising and, once more, quell a burgher rebellion.²

The dramatic events on the colony's eastern frontier during the period of the first British occupation have served (just as they did then) to divert attention from the less dramatic and, economically, less important northern frontier. The complex relationships between Xhosa, Khoikhoi and colonists (which exploded in the tumultuous events of the 1799 frontier war) have also served to diminish the significance of the perennial struggle between the colonists and the

1. See M. Boucher and N. Penn, (eds.), *Britain at the Cape, 1795 to 1803*, (Johannesburg, 1992), pp.125-133 for details of the crisis facing the VOC.

2. For the British policy on the Eastern Frontier during the period of the First British Occupation see H. Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind*, (Cape Town, 1975) and his chapter, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, (Cape Town, 1989).

San.³ A partial exception to this is to be found in the importance which both contemporary authorities and present historians have attached to that region of the eastern frontier where intense San resistance was encountered; the north-eastern districts of the Sneeu-berg, Tarka and Bamboesberg.⁴ By 1795 the constant hostilities in these parts were affecting the security of the entire eastern frontier since the colonists of the Sneeu-berg were never able to come to the assistance of their hard pressed brethren to the south. In fact, so critical had the struggle become by 1798, that large numbers of colonists were abandoning their farms in the north-east to join the growing numbers of those retreating before the Xhosa in the south.⁵

The colony's entire eastern frontier was thus in a state of violent crisis and dangerous instability, a situation which had to be rectified if Britain wished to consolidate her power at the Cape. As far as the British rulers were concerned the colonists' relationships with the San were significant, primarily in so far as they concerned the security of the eastern frontier. Events on the northern frontier did not, in contrast, seem to necessitate direct government intervention. It is for these reasons that the origins of British policy concerning the colonists and the San are to be sought on the eastern frontier.

Nobody had a greater influence in shaping this policy than John Barrow, the private secretary of the governor, Earl Macartney.⁶ Barrow was specifically sent to the eastern borders of the colony in 1797 in an endeavour to ascertain the causes of unrest and to promote peace. An important aim of his mission was to attempt to establish contact with the San to the north-east of Graaff-Reinet "to bring about a conversation with some of the chiefs of this people; to try if, by presents and persuasion, they could be prevailed upon to quit their present wild and marauding way of life."⁷ Since the San, because of their egalitarian social structures, did not, as a rule, have "chiefs" (in the sense understood by their European contemporaries) this objective, although it was not

3. On the Khoikhoi rebellion and the Third Frontier War of 1799-1803 see S. Newton-King and V.C. Malherbe, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion In The Eastern Cape*.

4. P.J. van der Merwe's *Noordwaartse Beweging*, never underestimates the San of the north-eastern frontier. See also S. Newton-King, "Khoisan Resistance to Colonial Expansion 1700-1828", in T. Cameron and S.B. Spies, (eds.), *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, (Johannesburg, 1986) and R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*. S. Newton-King's doctoral thesis, "The Enemy Within" is also much concerned with the San of this region.

5. Van der Merwe, *Noordwaartse Beweging*, pp.10-24; Giliomee, *Britse Bewind*, pp.23, 264-6; J.S. Marais, *Maynier*, pp.61, 67.

6. J. Barrow, *Travels*; C. Lloyd, *Mr Barrow of the Admiralty: A Life of Sir John Barrow 1764-1848* (London, 1970). See also Boucher and Penn, *Britain at the Cape*, pp.91-170 for an assessment of Barrow's contribution to the first British occupation.

7. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.237.

unprecedented, was doomed to failure.⁸ There was, however, a more fundamental impediment to the establishment of peace between the San and the colonists, namely, the uncompromising attitude of the latter. As early as January, 1797, General Craig had written to the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* of Graaff-Reinet to suggest to them that it was impractical to attempt to exterminate the San and that they would be better advised to treat the San more kindly, in particular, by allowing captives to return to their fellows. The response to this was that it had been found that humanitarian treatment was wasted on the San. Captives who were well treated simply ran away and became an even greater menace to the colonists than before, especially if they had stolen firearms with them. This point was reiterated in June 1797 when Bresler, the newly appointed *landdrost* to Graaff-Reinet, advised Macartney that, in his opinion, the San were a nation of thieves who were unlikely to respond to overtures of peace and who could only be dealt with through the agency of commandos.⁹

Notwithstanding Bresler's pessimism Barrow accompanied him to Graaff-Reinet in order to initiate negotiations with the San of the neighbouring mountains. The pro-British Fiscal, W.S. van Ryneveld, had meanwhile persuaded Macartney that the San's territory was beyond the Seekoei River, and that if they could not be encouraged to remove themselves thither by peaceful means, they should be forced to do so.¹⁰ From Graaff-Reinet Barrow, along with some local farmers, toured the troubled regions of the Sneeuberg, the Tarka and Brintjieshoogte. He also journeyed up the Seekoei River as far as the Orange but in all this country the only San who were encountered were a group who had to be stalked and surprised using typical commando tactics.¹¹ Barrow's account of this episode is not only one of the most informative descriptions of a commando in action but it is also one of the most moving passages in all of his *Travels*. The attack obviously made a great impression on him, an impression which he conveyed to Macartney, and which coloured British perceptions about Boer brutality towards the San for a

8. See A.B. Smith, "On Becoming a Herder", for a discussion of the social relations of hunting societies. The example of *Veldkorporaal* Jacob de Clerq who, in 1776, succeeded in making temporary peace with the San of the Koups, is instructive. He had requested that the government send him a staff of office so that he could give it to a 'chief' appointed by him: CA, C 655, Dag Register Van Stellenbosch en Drakenstein, 1771-1779, 5 March 1776. But the trouble with such arrangements was that it marked the recipient of the honour as a collaborator and invited the wrath of other, unpacified San. See chapter 6, p.226 above.

9. Gilione, *Britse Bewind*, p.264.

10. Ibid., p.264.

11. There are many similarities between Barrow's trip to the Sneeuberg and the Seekoei River and the trip made by Gordon in 1779. Gordon too was in search of the San, with the intention of negotiating a peace with them, but he was even less successful than Barrow in establishing contact. See chapter 6, pp.242-3 above.

long time thereafter.¹² Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that British policy towards the San, on both the eastern and northern frontiers, was shaped by Barrow's experiences on this occasion.

Even though Barrow had insisted, beforehand, that every possible care should be taken to avoid harming the San, and that guns should only be used if they were absolutely necessary for self defence, blood was spilt:

By the faint light I could only discover a few straw mats, bent each between two sticks, into a semi-circular form; but my ears were stunned with a horrid scream like the war whoop of savages; the shrieking of women and the cries of children proceeded from every side. I rode up with the commandant and another farmer, both of whom fired on the kraal. I immediately expressed to the former my very great surprise that he, of all others, should have been the first to break a condition which he had solemnly promised to observe, and that I had expected from him a very different kind of conduct. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "have you not seen a shower of arrows falling among us?" I certainly had seen neither arrows nor people, but had heard enough to pierce the hardest heart; and I peremptorily insisted that neither he nor any of his party should fire another shot. In justification of their conduct they began to search on the ground for the arrows, a search in which they were encouraged to continue, in order to give the poor wretches a little time to scramble away among the detached fragments of rocks and the shrubbery that stood on the side of the heights. On their promises I could place no sort of dependence, knowing that, like true sportsmen when game was sprung, they could not withhold their fire. Of this I was presently convinced by the report of a musquet on the opposite side of

12. Mary Louise Pratt analyses Barrow's tendency towards "Othering" the San in her chapter "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen" in H.L. Gates, (ed.), *"Race", Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1985). Although it is fairly easy to accuse Barrow of portraying the San as the "Other" the insights of Pratt's chapter are somewhat weakened by her failure to place Barrow in the context of other, earlier, discourses on the Khoisan or, for that matter, in the context of his official mission. See N. Penn, "Mapping the Cape: John Barrow and the First British Occupation of the Colony, 1795-1803", *Pretexts*, Vol. 4, no.2, 1993, pp.20-43. Within this context Barrow's sympathy and originality become more evident. The most remarkable feature of Barrow's account is not, perhaps, his portrayal of the San but his portrayal of the "Boor"; that is, the Dutch colonist. Barrow's influence in shaping British attitudes towards the Afrikaner have been commented on by Michael Streak, *The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English, 1795-1854* (Cape Town, 1974), pp.1-22.

Since Pratt does not draw attention to those aspects of Barrow's discourse which were most obviously annoying to his near contemporaries it will not be out of place to rectify this omission by allowing one of Barrow's critics a voice. In 1809 Colonel Collins, who in 1808 had been employed by the British administration to undertake a mission very similar to Barrow's, commented: "But I am much distressed to believe that the accounts given of them are exaggerated (i.e. acts of cruelty by colonists); as they have been principally received from a late traveller, who, from some unaccountable cause, seems to have exerted all his ingenuity to exhibit the Africa farmers in the most unfavourable point of view, and whose representations of their treatment of the aborigines, having been conveyed through the medium of eloquent declamation and specious philanthropy, seem to have been implicitly received and regarded as incontrovertible, although his statements respecting them are extremely incorrect, as I have known from many particulars that have fallen under my observation". R. Collins, "Report on the Bosjesmen", in Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, p.34.

the hill; and, on riding round the point, I perceived a poor Bosjesman lying dead upon the ground. It appeared that as one of our party, who could speak their language, was endeavouring to prevail on the savages to come down from the heights, this Bosjesman had stolen close to him behind a rock, and was taking deliberate aim with his drawn bow, which another of the colonists perceiving, levelled his musquet and shot him dead. It had been hoped the affair would happily have been accomplished without the shedding of human blood, and that the views of the expedition would have met with no interruption from an accident of such a nature.¹³

It was only with the greatest of difficulty that the terrified San could be induced to draw near. Barrow's impression of them, though by no means flattering, was that they were "mild and manageable in the highest degree". In his opinion they were far more sinned against than sinning, forced to retaliate as best they could against "the brutality and gross depravity of the boors" who habitually enslaved their women and children whilst ceaselessly trying to drive them from their land. Though Barrow acknowledged that the loose political structures of the San made it difficult to negotiate a far reaching peace he became convinced that the prime cause of the hostilities existing between them and the colonists was the commando system.¹⁴ On his return to Cape Town he argued strongly that further commandos against the San should be prohibited, since they were guaranteed to increase, rather than diminish, bitterness along the frontier. He also urged that the colonists should be prevented from making incursions into territory occupied by other groups since this was bound to lead to conflict.¹⁵

It was this latter point, in particular, which impressed Macartney, for he cannot have failed to observe that the northern boundaries of the colony were so vague as to be virtually non-existent. It was, doubtless, with the intention of being better informed about the nature and extent of colonial settlement in the north-west that Barrow was despatched, in April 1798, to these regions.¹⁶ Even before his departure, however, the governor had received welcome intelligence from the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch that the *veldwagtmeester* of the Roggeveld, Floris Visser, believed it was possible to make peace with the San of his district. Why was such an initiative forthcoming from the Roggeveld but not from the Sneeuberg? In order to answer this question a brief survey will have to be made of the state of affairs concerning relations between colonists

13. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.272-273.

14. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.273-293. Of the San's political structures Barrow remarked (p.274): "We had wished to speak with the captain or chief of the horde, but they assured us there was no such person; that everyone was master of his own family, and acted entirely without control, being at liberty to remain with, or quit, the society as it best suited them."

15. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.290-292.

16. Penn, "Mapping the Cape", pp.32.

and Khoisan in that much neglected area of the colony - the northern frontier zone - around the beginning of the 1790s.

COLONISTS AND KHOISAN RESISTANCE IN THE ROGGEVELD AND NIEUWEVELD, 1790-1795

As far as the colonists of the northern frontier zone were concerned the situation in their part of the world was as critical as that faced by the Sneeubergers in the 1790s. In September¹⁷ and October 1790 there had been considerable stock theft in the Roggeveld, so much so that *Veldwagtmeester* Gerrit Maritz wrote to the *landdrost* to complain that the San were in the process of gaining the upper hand, and that their constant "murder and robbery" was going to result in the abandonment of the Roggeveld. Groups of Khoikhoi had also been seen roaming the district armed with muskets and in numbers which were more than a match for a small commando.¹⁸ In fact, during a commando which Maritz and forty other men had undertaken in August and September there had been a most disturbing incident. The commando had been scouring the countryside on the way to the Kareeberg and had successfully killed or captured a number of San. In the mountains themselves - a range whose "desert wilderness" and "frightful solitude" filled a later traveller with "silent melancholy and repugnance"¹⁹ - was a height known as "de Bossimans berg" which was occupied by a kraal of San.²⁰ The commando attacked early in the morning but, by four in the afternoon, was forced to retreat as the defenders had muskets as well as bows and arrows. The longer the fight continued, the more reinforcements came from other kraals to defend the mountain. Here was undeniable evidence that, thanks to an increasing ability to acquire firearms²¹ (either through theft or from Khoikhoi *drosters*), the unconquered Khoisan of the Kareeberg were capable of beating off a commando.²²

17. In September 1790 J.A. Nel reported to the *landdrost* that 500 sheep and 69 oxen had been stolen from his district. Two shepherds and a slave were killed during the robberies. A commando killed seventeen of the thieves and captured four children. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Nel - Landdrost, 25 Sept 1790.

18. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 15 Oct. 1790.

19. H. Lichtenstein, *Travels In Southern Africa In the Years 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806*, 2 Vols. Van Riebeeck Society Reprint (Cape Town, 1930), Vol. 2, pp.260-261.

20. A distinguishing feature of the Kareeberg (whose name means 'dry' or 'bare') is that the summits of the range are flattened, "each having a level of some hours at the top". G.S. Nienaber and P.E. Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica A*** (Pretoria, 1977) p.651; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 11, p.258.

21. In December 1791 Maritz reported how a group of Khoikhoi servants had deserted their masters and attempted to join the San, taking stolen firearms with them. A commando gave chase and captured the *drosters* after an exchange of fire in which one of the Khoikhoi was wounded. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 26 Dec. 1791

22. On this occasion Maritz's commando killed fourteen and captured four people. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 18 Sept. 1790.

At about the same time the districts of the Nieuweveld and Koup were almost completely abandoned by the colonists. In the Koup, according to the 1809 report of Colonel Collins, about 1 000 San entered the region in 1791 and inaugurated a most uncomfortable period for the *trekboers* which lasted until the end of the century.²³ Though the number of San (in "two hordes") might have been exaggerated there is every likelihood that the group Collins was told about was the same one reported by Gerrit Maritz on 14 October 1791: "in de Koup onder de nuwevelts berg een groote craal bossimans moordenaars legt mit 18 snapaans".²⁴ A commando of fifty-two men, which he led against them in December, was unable to find them as they had fled.²⁵ By January 1792 this group seems to have returned to the Koup, basing itself beneath the Tafelberg, and necessitating the despatch of another commando, which attempted to recapture stolen sheep and avenge the murder of three shepherds. This commando was shocked to discover that the kraal of robbers had been reinforced by a number of Khoikhoi who used their muskets to such effect that the colonists were forced to fly for their lives. The Khoikhoi in question were known to have grown up with the colonists and they were skilled in handling firearms. By the time Maritz raised another, more powerful, commando the kraal had disappeared but their lurking presence, along with conditions of severe drought, caused nearly all the *trekboers* to abandon the district.²⁶

The situation in the Hantam at this time has already been described²⁷ and we may conclude that, during the early 1790s, the farmers of the northern frontier zone were as hard pressed as those in the Sneeuberg. Nor can it be said that the situation improved between 1792 and 1795. It was in 1792 that the Council of Policy approved of the resolution passed by the *Landdrost* and *Heemraden* of Graaff-Reinet in 1791, namely, to offer a reward for captive Khoisan resisters. Ostensibly, this resolution was passed in order to keep sight of the fact that: "de creaturen teegens welke dezelve komen ingerigt te worden, hoe woest en wreed ook egter behoorende onder de classe des menschedoms, men gevolglijk dezelve levens zo veel mogelijk diend te spaaren".²⁸ The only person who seemed to take this proposal seriously was, as we have seen, Petrus Pienaar, and

23. Collins' Report on the Bosjesmen in D. Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, p.34; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, p.20.

24. "In the Koup beneath the Nieuweveld Mountain lies a great kraal of bushmen murderers with 18 muskets", CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 14 Oct. 1791.

25. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 22 Dec. 1791.

26. CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 10 Jan. 1792.

27. See previous chapter.

28. "The creatures against whom these measures have been passed, wild and savage though they are, belong to the class of humanity and one is therefore obliged to spare their lives as much as possible." Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, pp.45-6.

his interpretation of the instructions alarmed rather than reassured his superiors.²⁹ For the most part, for time honoured reasons, Boer commandos continued to capture women and children whilst killing the men.

In March and September 1792 Gerrit Maritz led two unsuccessful commandos in the Roggeveld. On returning from the first of these he suffered the agonising frustration of finding that four of his servants had been murdered and nearly all of his livestock killed or stolen. Two guns and all his trek oxen were also missing.³⁰

These events were, however, overshadowed by those which occurred in the vicinity of the Koup in June that year. At Leeu Rivier (the present day Leeu Gamka) two butchers of the Van Reenen brothers (in whose hands lay the Company's meat *pagt*) and nine of their assistants were attacked whilst they were busy driving a large quantity of livestock, purchased in the east, towards the Cape Town market. Their assailants numbered about 300 and were described as being San, many of whom were armed with muskets. Of the 12 000 sheep and 368 cattle, 6 000 and 253 were stolen respectively.³¹ It is probable that the thieves were the same group of well-armed Khoisan which had been terrorising the district for the past year. On this occasion their target was ill chosen and their success unfortunate because the government, prompted no doubt by the influential Van Reenens, took the most rigorous steps to crush the threat to the Company's meat supply. In July two exceptionally well-provisioned and powerful commandos were organised to clear the Nieuweveld of robbers. These operations seem to have been orchestrated from the *drostdy* of Graaff-Reinet and to have been commanded by proven leaders of that district, namely, N. Smit and Johannes van der Walt.³²

Smit's commando was the first to strike and annihilated the kraal of one of the principal resisters, a certain Vlamink. An estimated 300 Khoisan were killed and 15 captured in an action which can only be described as a massacre. 860 sheep and 30 cattle were recovered. Vlamink's partner, a man by the name of Courage, had had the good fortune to argue with his friend four days before the commando's attack. He had, therefore, timeously removed himself, his followers and his booty

29. See chapter 9, pp.340-341 above.

30. CA, 1/STB 10/163, 6 March 1792; CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, [18?] Sept 1792. Gerrit Olivier - Landdrost, 20 Aug. 1792.

31. G. Wagenaar, "Johannes Gysbertus Van Reenen - Sy Aandeel In Die Kaapse Geskiedenis tot 1806" (M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1976), pp.106-107; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, p.50. Van der Merwe says 11 000 sheep instead of 12 000.

32. Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, pp.49-50.

from the place of death. Unfortunately, his reprieve was only temporary. Though the horses of Smit's commando were exhausted, those of Van der Walt's were fresh. Following instructions to proceed beyond the Koup to the Sak River he caught up with Courage's kraal and destroyed it. A further three kraals were discovered and wiped out: 231 Khoisan were killed or captured whilst 325 sheep and 15 cattle were recovered.³³

With between 500 and 600 of the Nieuweveld marauders slaughtered it might be assumed that this sector of the frontier was once again safe for Boer occupation but this was not, in fact, the case. The drought-stricken heights of the Nieuweveld and the parched plains of the Koup beneath did not permit the colonists to establish themselves there in anything like sufficient numbers, or for the necessary duration of time, to expel all the clusters of hostile Khoisan. For the moment, however, the authorities persuaded themselves that the best way to repopulate the region with stock farmers was to allow Johannes van der Walt to turn it into his own personal fiefdom. In February 1793 he was authorised to settle in the Nieuweveld where, he proclaimed, with the help of his family he anticipated destroying and uprooting the robbers completely. The two farms which he requested for himself were granted, rent free, by the government. He was also given almost total power, as *kommandant* of the region, to order *veldwagtmeesters*, *korporaals* and burghers out on commando as he saw fit, the only proviso being that he should inform the distant *landdrost* of his plans.³⁴

This arrangement does not, however, seem to have been an unqualified success. The usual guerrilla warfare continued. In April 1793 the San stole over 300 sheep from Petrus Theron and killed his shepherd. In the same month a group of about forty men made off with nearly 300 of Jacobus Nel's sheep. Nel, a *veldwagtmeester* in the Roggeveld, was unable to launch a commando because of the prevailing horse sickness. He had further trouble with the San in May and July.³⁵ Maritz, at Van der Walt's request, wrote to ask for a large quantity of ammunition in order to provision a commando for August. In fact, Van der Walt proposed the mobilisation of no fewer than four commandos at once, and his response seems to have caused the authorities to have second thoughts about his competency. Whether the government found his proposals too

33. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Van der Walt - Governor, 23 Nov. 1792. Resolutions of the Council of Policy, Resol. 12 Feb. 1793, in *Papers Relative*, p.21; Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, pp.50-51. Van der Merwe says 321 instead of 231 Khoisan.

34. Van der Merwe, *Noordwaardste Beweging*, p.52.

35. CA, 1/STB 10/167, Nel - Landdrost, 18 April 1793; CA, 1/STB 10/162, Nel - Landdrost, 12 Aug. 1793. In May the San attacked Nel's farm and shot at him. He wounded one and they retreated. In July, whilst out hunting in the Agter Roggeveld, Nel stumbled across a group of nine San. He killed one and the others escaped but they had already broken into an empty farmhouse and wrecked it.

expensive or excessive cannot be stated, but the *landdrost* balked at the suggestion and withheld his sanction.³⁶ A commando did take place in August and September but it was a smaller affair than envisaged (twenty-four Europeans, thirteen Khoikhoi and one "Bastaard") and under the direct command of Gerrit Maritz.

This commando campaigned in the Kareeberg. On 12 September, at the Brak River, a San kraal was discovered and taken by surprise in a dawn attack. Twenty were killed and sixteen children captured. Twelve days later, behind the Kareeberg, another kraal was attacked. This time nine were killed and seven children captured. It was surely no coincidence that exactly one child was taken for each colonist. (There should have been twenty-four captives but one of them had died "naturally" on the way back). On the 2 October, preparatory to disbanding the commando, Maritz divided the children amongst the Europeans in an unusual ceremony at "Wilgebooms Vonbijn", one of the many abandoned farms in the Nieuweveld. He obliged the men to sign an extraordinary statement in which they promised not to mishandle the children who were, so Maritz had them acknowledge, innocent of any of their parents' deeds. They also had to agree to appear before the government, with the child, should the *veldwagmeester* ever come to hear of any complaints concerning their treatment of their captives. Finally, they also had to witness that Maritz had led the commando in an irreproachable fashion. All signed.³⁷

Maritz's precautionary measures suggest that there had been some official discomfort about the conduct of recent commandos, and about the maltreatment of Khoisan servants. The resolutions of the Council of Policy for 23 October 1793 contain criticisms of the cruel treatment of Khoikhoi by the colonists and it was doubtless feared that San captives were also mistreated. Since 1776 San children who had been captured by commandos were supposed to have been registered, like "Bastaard-Hottentots", with the local *landdrost*, and their owners were required to provide them with food, clothing and shelter. This practice had lapsed (if, indeed, it had ever been

36. CA, 1/STB 10/163, 4th June 1793; CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 9 May 1793. Following Van der Walt's command Maritz also wrote to *Veldwagmeester* Frans Lubbe of the Biedouw asking him to muster all suitable men from his district, "Christians" as well as "Hottentots" and "Bastaards", at Van der Westhuizen's farm in the Roggeveld, by 1 August. CA, 1/STB 10/167, Maritz - Lubbe, 2 April 1793. Lubbe was also ordered to supply waggons, provisions and livestock for the trek into the Nieuweveld. He was extremely reluctant to do so, pointing out that there were only five Christians in his district who had wagons and that they were all very poor men. During the course of the trek into regions where no roads existed a wagon was bound to be smashed up and would have to be left lying in the veld. CA, 1/STB 10/167, Lubbe - Landdrost, 26 May 1793.

37. CA, 1/STB 10/164, Journal of Commando by G. Maritz, 20 Aug. 1793; Maritz-Landdrost, 2 Oct. 1793.

seriously observed) and Maritz's gesture, whilst in no way inaugurating an era of reform, was a sop to the government's ineffectual qualms.³⁸

In the meantime prospects of peace looked as remote as ever within the frontier zone. Rumours of a general uprising of the Khoikhoi, which swept through the outlying districts in September, had a most unsettling effect.³⁹ So too did the attempts of *Veldwagtmeesters* Willem Burger and Jacobus Nel to arrest Afrikaners.⁴⁰ In October Maritz reported that the country was in a state of uproar, with danger to be feared from both "wilde en make hottentots", and a number of his men out on commando.⁴¹ A year later there was still considerable agitation amongst the Khoikhoi of the Bokkeveld⁴² and this widespread state of fear contributed to an increasing number of incidents of brutality, on the part of the colonists of the northern frontier, towards their Khoikhoi servants.⁴³ 1794 was a particularly bad year as far as the maltreatment of labour was concerned with each act of cruel oppression increasing, rather than diminishing, Khoikhoi discontent.⁴⁴ In the Roggeveld, San raiders continued to steal livestock and, despite their frequent practice of murdering shepherds in order to acquire their firearms, were increasingly attracting deserting Khoikhoi labourers to their ranks. This development was commented on by *Veldwagtmeester* Johannes Karstens in August 1795 when he wrote to the *landdrost* to report that:

ik dagelijks nog hoort van samerotting der Bastaats hottentotten en bossimans om kwaad te doen ... ook heb ik gehoord dat [ik e] elf mit geweers al van Roggeveld weg geloope is.⁴⁵

On the eve of the first British occupation there was thus little to indicate that conditions in the Roggeveld were conducive to peace negotiations between the *trekboers* and the San. Neither side appeared to be defeated though it is possible that both had come to realise that there was no military solution to their conflict. Behind the unvanquished defiance of the San there were,

38. See chapter 6, pp.222-230 above for a discussion. Also CA, 1/STB 18/196, Lyst der Sodanige Personen dewelke volgens permissie va de Heere Landdrost hunne bij hint woonagtig - Bosjesmans Hottentotten van sekere bepaalde jaaren in haar dienst mogen houden; Resol., 23 Oct. 1793, in *Papers Relative* pp.21-22; P.J. Venter, "Die Inboek stelsel", *Die Huisgenoot*, 1 June 1934.

39. CA, 1/STB 10/162, letters from Piet Joubert and Bernardus Bilion, 7 Sept. 1793; Bernardus Bilion, 10 Sept. 1793; Pieter Jacobs, 15 Sept. 1793; Johannes Lubbe, 16 Sept. 1793. See chapter 7, p.275; chapter 9, pp.349-351.

40. See chapter nine above.

41. "Wild and tame Hottentots". CA, 1/STB 10/162, Maritz - Landdrost, 16 Oct. 1793.

42. CA, 1/STB 10/163, Pieter Jacobs - Landdrost, 20 Oct. 1794.

43. See chapter nine above. Also N. Penn, "Labour, land and livestock in the Western Cape", pp.13-19.

44. See chapter seven above.

45. "Daily I continue to hear of the gathering together of Bastard Hottentots and bushmen to make trouble ... I've also heard that eleven have run away from the Roggeveld with guns." CA, 1/STB 10/151, Karstens - Landdrost, 15 Aug. 1795.

however, processes at work which were gradually undermining their ability to survive. Bushmanland had always been an environmentally marginal area, subject to periodic droughts, and out of which it was seasonally necessary to move, either in search of water or in pursuit of the migrating herds of game as they sought fresh grazing. The /Xam of Bushmanland were, however, running out of territory into which they could temporarily escape when they needed to replenish themselves. In the west the colonists had effectively closed Namaqualand to them and the way to the south was also barred. In the north the Orange river had become an area of insecurity whilst to the east lay the unenticing battle zone of the Sneeuberg. Even within the shrinking confines of their territory the /Xam were experiencing the deterioration of their environment. The *trekboers'* custom of driving their flocks and herds into the area after the rains caused serious damage to the vegetation⁴⁶ whilst, at the same time, it denied grazing and water resources to the wild animals. Colonial hunting parties slaughtered vast quantities of game. *Biltong* had become a staple of frontier life and farmers, whenever possible, preferred to save their stock by eating venison. The great herds of eland favoured for the production of *biltong* (and symbolically central to San culture)⁴⁷ were, by the 1790s, only to be found beyond the Sak River. Wagon-loads of dried meat were taken from Bushmanland and the San's resources were correspondingly depleted.⁴⁸ In these circumstances it was, perhaps, not surprising that the San would give serious attention to any proposal which promised to guarantee them exclusive rights to their land. Such a proposal was, incredibly, forthcoming from the colonists, and the initiative was associated with a new name amongst the Roggevelders: Floris Visser.

46. See J.P.H. Acocks, "The Flora that matched the Fauna", *Bothalia*, 12, 4, 1979, pp.673-709 for a discussion of the desertification of the Karoo.

47. See chapter six, pp.233-4 above.

48. Lichtenstein describes the return of an eland hunting party in the Roggeveld in November 1803.

"The company had gone five days northwards, beyond the boundaries of the colony, and besides all the smaller game they had killed, which served as their daily food, they brought home seventeen elands. These animals weighed from seven to eight hundred pounds a-piece, so that the portion of each of the hunters was about four thousand pounds of pure, excellent flesh. This was cut to pieces upon the spot, salted and packed in the skins, and thus brought home in a wagon they had taken with them. Here it was to be smoked, and would then be a plentiful supply of cheap and wholesome food.

The great muscle of the thigh, smoked, is more particularly esteemed. These are cut out at their whole length, and from the resemblance they then bear to bullock's tongues, are called thigh-tongues. They are often sent as presents, or for sale, to Cape Town, and are there eaten raw, and cut into very thin slices, with bread and butter. Thus prepared, they are esteemed an excellent *gourmandise*." Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.120-121.

FLORIS VISSER AND THE PEACE PROPOSALS OF 1798

Visser first came to prominence on 26 May 1797 when he arrived at the *drostdy* at Stellenbosch to report that a group of Korana, numbering about 300 strong, had entered the Roggeveld. The invasion of a group who normally lived over the Orange River, sixty hours journey to the north-east of the Roggeveld, was sufficiently alarming for the recently appointed *veldwagtmeester* to ride forty hours to the south-west to report the matter. Although the intruders seemed peaceful, stating that they wished to "dwell with the Christians", there were certain features about the group which disturbed Visser. In the first place their numbers included several Xhosa and San, neither of which people were extremely popular within the colony. In the second place none of the refugees (for this is what they undoubtedly were) had any cattle, a circumstance which caused Visser to suspect that "they might have formed a plan to plunder the inhabitants of his district". Visser wished to be instructed in how to deal with the situation but his own suggestion was that peaceful persuasion should be used in an endeavour to get the Korana to return to their own country. If this failed, force should be used. This course of action won Governor Macartney's approval for he was particularly concerned to avoid recourse to arms.⁴⁹

We must assume that "peaceful persuasion" was successful for there was no outbreak of violence and some, at least, of the Korana and Xhosa were permitted to enter the service of the Roggeveld farmers. For his part Visser won himself the reputation of being a skilful negotiator, and one who was able to exert a pacific influence amongst the diverse groups of the frontier zone. The few recorded details which illuminate his career before 1797 indicate that he was in the forefront of the Roggeveld frontier from 1787 onwards. In that year he registered the farm "Drupfontein", over the Vis River in the Roggeveld which he had taken over from his brother, Johannes Hendrik.⁵⁰ In 1791 Floris, aged thirty-three, registered "de Bastards Craal", a Middle Roggeveld farm described as being "the last farm in the Karoo" and first registered in 1776 by Gerrit Coetzec.⁵¹ He participated in the commando of September 1793 under Maritz's leadership and,

49. CA, BO 149, Ross - Landdrost, 29 May 1797; CA, LM 48, No. 139, 19 May 1797.

50. CA, RLR 35, 14 Aug. 1787, p.148. Visser was born in 1758, the son of Gerrit Visser and Maria Margaretha Maritz. De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 2, p.1065. Johannes Visser had taken "Drupfontein" over from Hendrik Korf in 1779 (CA, RLR 26, 8 Feb. 1779, p.31) but had been forced to abandon it in March 1781 because of the drought.

51. CA, RLR 37, 14 Feb. 1791, p.3; CA, RLR 24, 23 Jan. 1776, p.72. It was the missionary Kicherer (see below, p.411) who described Visser's farm thus in *Transactions Of The Missionary Society*, No.1, Vol. II (London, 1804) p.3.

when the latter resigned as *veldwagtmeester* in June 1795, experienced at first hand the perils of frontier farming.⁵²

In October 1795 an incident took place on Visser's farm which served as a reminder that the San were not the only dangerous neighbours in the Roggeveld. Whilst Visser was away his farmhouse was visited by the *knecht* of a certain Van Elzer, a man by the name of Wenner. With him were two Khoikhoi servants and another colonist called Van de Arondt. These men demanded food from Visser's servants but there was none to be had. Wenner's servants, at his bidding, then seized Visser's servant Jager Bossieman, beat him and held his head in the fire, thereby burning his scalp most severely. They also beat an elderly Khoikhoi named Vigilant so hard that the wounds on his head were still visible thirteen days later.⁵³ Against a background of frequent robberies and commandos Visser lost seventy-six cattle in 1796 whilst, in two separate incidents, a slave and a Khoikhoi servant of his were also killed.⁵⁴

It was in these trying circumstances that Visser, some time before May 1797, replaced Jasper Cloete, Maritz's successor, as *veldwagtmeester* of the Roggeveld. His elevation to this office was fiercely resented by ex-*Veldwagtmeester* Maritz who, for reasons which are not entirely clear, seems to have hated Visser. Perhaps Maritz regretted his loss of influence and was jealous of Visser's new authority. Whatever the reason may have been, however, Maritz did not hesitate to express an embittered criticism of Visser's conduct in virtually every letter which he wrote to the authorities from 1797 onwards.⁵⁵ The antagonism was reciprocated. The first inkling of this feud is contained in a letter Maritz wrote to the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch in September 1797. Here he complained that he understood that Visser had laid a charge against him. The charge - that he had refused to supply a Khoikhoi for service on commando - was, according to Maritz, ridiculous, because he had ridden to Visser himself to explain that the man in question had been lying sick for two weeks. At the time Visser had seemed to be satisfied and if he was now seeking to portray him as an unwilling burgher (Maritz continued), the reason was probably to be found in the

52. Maritz resigned temporarily in June 1795. His successor as *veldwagtmeester* was Jasper Cloete. CA, 1/STB 10/163, 2 June 1795.

53. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Petrus Jacobus Theron and Petrus van der Westhuysen - Landdrost, 22 Oct. 1795.

54. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Casper Cloete - Landdrost, 9 Sept. 1796. Visser was not the only Roggeveld farmer to be hard hit at this time for his fellow colonists Abraham Botma, Michiel Hauk and Cornelius Carstens were also robbed.

55. De Villiers and Pana give Maritz's baptism date as 9.9.1779. If this is correct, and close to his date of birth, Maritz was an incredibly young *veldwagtmeester* in 1790 - eleven years old! (Vol. 1, p.537). I suspect that Maritz was older than this and that there is an error somewhere in the Maritz genealogy. According to De Villiers and Pana his parents married in 1776.

difference of opinion which they had had in January. In that month, according to Maritz, Visser had caused an uproar in the district by declaring that there was about to be a Khoikhoi uprising. Maritz had refused to lend credence to these rumours and had advised Visser not to trouble the government with his apprehensions.⁵⁶

A further opportunity to complain about Visser's conduct presented itself in October of the same year. Maritz was visited by two Xhosa who complained that Visser had shot and wounded their chief, "Caapiteyn Danser", with small-shot. These Xhosa were presumably part of the group who had entered the colony in May along with the Kora refugees. They had been working with Danser at Visser's farm since the *veldwagtmeester* had hired them for the winter. According to Maritz it now seemed as if Visser, instead of allowing the Xhosa to return to their own country, was intent on provoking them to rebellion, just as he had provoked the local Khoikhoi in January, by putting them in chains and sending them before the *landdrost* as murderers.

Such conduct was bound to place the Roggeveld farmers in the greatest peril, not just from the San or Khoi, but from the "Kaffers" as well who were "een wrekende naasie". Danser's two emissaries, Swaartebooi and April, had, in fact, already threatened the direst consequences in the event of their leader's death.⁵⁷

Visser's response to this was that he had been busy investigating a report from Jochem Scholtz concerning a runaway slave of the latter.⁵⁸ Scholtz believed the slave to be hiding with a Xhosa captain called Brooddis. Since Brooddis had a musket (which he falsely declared he had obtained from the governor) Scholtz was unwilling to press his investigations without backing, particularly since Brooddis, refusing to surrender the gun, had joined Danser on Visser's farm. When Visser went to confront the Xhosa the situation rapidly became violent. Visser struck Danser and Danser tried to retaliate by using his *knobkierrie*. Visser then reached for his musket and Danser for a knife. According to Visser he then fired a warning shot into the ground in front of Danser and some of the small-shot peppered his legs. Had Danser not backed off he would have fired again, this time directly at his legs. Visser then ordered Danser, in the name of the *landdrost*, to return

56. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Maritz - Landdrost, 23 Sept. 1797. See CA, LM 48, No.162, 18 Sept. 1797 and 26 Sept. 1797 for requests for ammunition for commandos in the Roggeveld.

57. "A vengeful nation". CA, 1/STB 10/165, Maritz - Landdrost, 23 Sept. 1797. For Danser see previous chapter. See also P. Kallaway, "Danser and the Xhosa of the Gariep", *African Studies Journal*, 41, No.1, 1982; E. Anderson, "A History of the Xhosa of the Northern Cape 1795-1879", (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1985).

58. For the perennial problem which Scholtz had with runaways, and the general phenomenon of *droster* gangs in the region see N. Penn, "Droster Gangs", pp.15-40 and chapter 7, pp.270-72 above.

to his own country. He concluded his letter by asking for advice on how to deal with the two problems which seem to have been the root cause of the above incident, namely, that of firearms finding their way into hands which were not sufficiently servile; and that of the presence of groups of Xhosa within his district.⁵⁹

With regards to the first issue the government's policy was quite clear: "that no arms or ammunition should be sold or bartered to the natives; ... and that natives found in possession of arms should be detained as vagabonds and delivered up to the fiscal (or *landdrosts*)".⁶⁰ As for the second issue, the proclamation of 27 June 1797 seemed to be appropriate: "Caffres were forbidden to enter the colony without proper passes, and those residing with inhabitants were desired to leave it within 12 months".⁶¹ In reality both of these resolutions were impossible to enforce and, despite Danser's removal to the Orange River, groups of Xhosa, some armed with guns, continued to cause anxiety amongst the inhabitants of the Roggeveld and Nieuweveld.⁶²

Thus far there had been very little in the actions of Visser to suggest that the *veldwagtmeester* was of a pacific temperament. On the contrary, if there was any truth in Maritz's interpretation of events, Visser was more likely to provoke trouble than to prevent it. Yet it was this man who, in

59. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Visser - Landdrost, 17 Nov. 1797.

60. Resolution and *Plakkaat* of 23 October, 1793, in *Papers Relative*, pp.21, 22.

61. *Plakkaat* of 27 June, 1797, in *Papers Relative*, p.22.

62. See chapter 10, pp.376-7 above. In 1805 Lichtenstein encountered a group of Xhosa in the Roggeveld and recorded the following observations:

Exceedingly amazed to see a party of these people at such a distance from the eastern border of the colony, we hastened up to them, and learnt that they belonged to an emigrant horde, who had now for several years, lived at the sources of the Chamka. Their chief had taken the name of Hendrik, and was in the habit of sending some of his people hither almost every year to beg live cattle, and any other kind of food they could procure.... Though they had now been for a long time separated from their countrymen, they had not lost that very distinctive characteristic of the caffres, - their importunate solicitation for whatever they saw. They begged, if not obstinately, yet unceasingly, for some contributions to their already tolerably large flocks of sheep, as well as for several utensils of different kinds, which they saw in our wagons, or in the house of the colonist.

Some of the people complained grievously to the landdrost of these importunate visits of the Caffres, whom they did not dare to drive away by force, lest they should raise themselves up a new enemy. On this our worthy magistrate desired that the three men might be called, when he ordered them to tell their chief, that the government were exceedingly displeased with the frequent visits made by them to the Roggeveld; that they were particularly angry at their coming this year, when the Christians themselves, being very much in want, it was not to be expected that they could have any thing to give the Caffres. If they (the Caffres) were not in a situation to maintain themselves, in the place they then inhabited, by means of their cattle, and other objects of industry, they had better hire themselves to the colonists as servants. Idle people, he said, were not to be endured in the colony, much less swarms of them roving about together; and he therefore gave them warning, either to quit the country directly, and return among their own people, or to expect that they would be compelled to support themselves by their industry, and that they would be made useful to the state at the expense of their liberty. *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.219-221.

the first half of 1798, visited Stellenbosch in order to outline a series of measures whose widespread adoption would, he believed, result in peace with the San. So impressed was the *landdrost* that he urged the governor to grant Visser an audience so as to hear at first hand what his plans were.⁶³ What were these remarkable measures?

There were three essential components to Visser's scheme: the gift of livestock to the San; the acknowledgement that the San had exclusive and uncontested right to certain tracts of land; and the appointment of mutually acceptable captains to the San, just as had been done with the Khoikhoi. It cannot be said that the second and third of these proposals were entirely original. The instructions given to the General Commando of 1774 mention the desirability of leaving land to those San who wished to live in peace and the appointment of captains from amongst their numbers.⁶⁴ Nor was the giving of gifts to the San something new: it had long been used as a customary procedure to ensure peace and goodwill.⁶⁵ Visser's proposals differed, however, in that livestock, instead of trinkets and tobacco, was to be given. Furthermore, these donations were to be contributed by the colonists with a view to establishing the San as pastoralists. In Visser's words they should have the right: "om met uitsondering na andere met dat verkreege vhee te moggen leggen en wyde aan de Carre en Paarde Cloofs bergen binne de Limite deezer colonie leggende".⁶⁶

Visser's suggestions were received by the governor with the greatest enthusiasm. In certain respects the proposals coincided with ideas which the British administration, briefed by Barrow, were anxious to implement. What had been lacking, until Visser's appearance at the Cape, was evidence, on the part of both the frontier farmers and the San, of a desire to co-operate together for peace. But Visser declared that he had already distributed livestock to, and discussed his proposals with, some of the San who were, apparently, favourably impressed. On 24 July, 1798,

63. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost - Governor, no date but probably early 1798.

64. CA, C 655, Dag Register van Stellenbosch, 1771-1779, 19 April 1774.

65. On 5 January 1779 Gordon made peace with the "Bushmen Captains" Gronjam and Doroep (or Groinam and Doeroep) near the Camdeni (or Camdini) River, a branch of the Krom River to the west of Loeriesfontein. His illustration of this event, in Raper and Boucher, (eds.), *Gordon*, Vol. 1, p.215, clearly shows the essential ceremony of gift giving and "vrede slagten" (or the slaughter of the gift of an ox). His own caption to the illustration is a better guide to the event than the editors', for the latter, unjustifiably, have: "Gordon presenting gifts to Khoi near the Kamdanie River, north-west of the Hantamsberg." It is evident from the text of his journal (see pp.214-216) that the peace-makers are San. Also, see pp.242-3 above. The likely meaning of the name "Camdini" is "Place of the brown honey-cakes", see Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica A**, pp.269-270.

66. "... to the exclusion of others with the livestock which they have obtained to settle and graze at the Carre and Paarde Cloofs within the limits of this colony." CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost - Governor, no date. It is likely that the Paarde Cloof mountains were part of the north-western Kareeberg since the farms "Groot Paardekloof" and "Klein Paardekloof" are to be found in that vicinity.

therefore, Macartney issued a proclamation which, whilst based on Visser's proposals, went far beyond them in that it elaborated the government's general policy concerning the "unsettled state of the frontier between the Farmers and the Bushmen". The extent of the government's ambitions is revealed in the first article of the proclamation:

It appears that one of the first steps towards civilising and conciliating the Bosheesmen, would be to impress them with a sense of the benefits arising from permanent property, preferably to casual and predatory supplies, and to make a free gift to them of such a quantity of Cattle, as may be sufficient for their immediate subsistence, and for a provision by the natural increase of the same, to relieve their future wants.⁶⁷

From this statement it may be seen that, in the eyes of the government, peace was contingent on "civilising" the San, "civilising" here being synonymous with the inculcation of an appreciation of "the benefits arising from permanent property". Such a change - from a form of primitive communism to a form of private property - had revolutionary implications for San society and, if implemented, would have meant the extinction of hunter-gatherer social formations. Nor was this simply a question of transforming the San into Khoikhoi (even if this was a social, cultural, political and economic possibility within the space of a few generations - which is doubtful) by turning them into independent pastoralists for, by 1798, it was impossible even for Khoikhoi to exist as independent pastoralists, and there is no reason to suppose that, in some of the most arid country in southern Africa, the San would have fared any better. Given the almost total ownership of the means of production by the colonists (and the unviability of independent Khoikhoi pastoralist social formations) the proposal to wean the San from their "casual and predatory supplies" was but a prelude to their wholesale incorporation into the colonial economy as labourers - the likelihood of which the authorities could not have been unaware.⁶⁸

We do not know whether the San realised that, with the gifts of livestock they received, they were expected to become pastoralists. Perhaps they saw the payment as a form of tribute, a guarantee of peace or, simply, as a token of goodwill. It soon became obvious, however, from their later

67. CA, BO 174, Original Placaat Book, 24 July, 1798, pp.80-82.

68. Consider the opinion of Fiscal Willem van Ryneveld, one of the principal and most influential Dutch collaborators with the British government, whose views cannot have been unknown: "In respect to the Hottentots. These for the most part cannot at present but be servants to the farmers. They neither possess cattle nor have other means of subsistence, and become dangerous subjects to society when suffered to wander about, without being servants, or having a livelihood - they skulk in the woods, and, if they can, steal the cattle of the farmers, upon which they live." W.S. van Ryneveld, "A Plan for amending the interior Police in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope", 31 Oct. 1801, in G.M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol. IV, May 1801 to February 1803, (London, 1899), p.90.

conduct, that they had neither the ability nor inclination to surrender their "way of life perfected",⁶⁹ (except under the direst compulsion), in order to become pastoral proletarians. The second article of the proclamation was concerned with details pertaining to the distribution of livestock to the San but it did not deal with the problem of installing a new set of values in the minds of the recipients. Instead it was stipulated that the quantities donated, the names of the donors and the names of the recipients should be recorded. The act of distribution was to be made by a *veldwagtmeester* in the presence of two witnesses, all three of whom were to sign a report of the proceedings which was then to be forwarded to the governor.

Article three stressed the importance of appointing chiefs or captains amongst the San, who were to be distinguished by their possession of metal-headed canes and brass gorgets, "in the same manner as the chiefs and captains of the other Hottentot tribes, dependent on the Government". Indeed, the San were to be persuaded "to consider themselves as under the protection and authority of the English Government," a state of mind which, incidentally, it was difficult enough to instil in the Dutch frontiersmen.⁷⁰

The San were to be given "a sufficient District beyond the Sak River towards the Kareeberg" which was to be acknowledged as theirs. They were also to be "left in possession of their just rights and habitations, and (were) not to be molested, nor their Children taken from them or made slaves or servants of, on any pretence whatsoever". The Government clearly perceived that the San had been unjustly harried for it explicitly prohibited *veldwagtmeesters* from launching commandos, or any other act of violence against them, except in self defence.

Some of the "principal Bushmen" were to be encouraged to journey to Cape Town to "wait upon the Governor" and "received marks of kindness and approbation from him, and presents for their wives and children". Every effort was to be made to impress upon "these poor creatures, the advantages they will derive from the present system, adopted solely for their benefit, by a mild and humane Government". Peace with the San was not, of course, solely for their benefit, in fact partially acknowledged in the wording of the lofty sentiments of article ten: "the reclaiming of these Boshiesmen from their present savage and deplorable state, is not only of the greatest

69. The phrase is R. Inskip's, in *The Peopling of Southern Africa*, (Cape Town, 1978), Chapter 4.

70. It is instructive to contrast the government's attitude towards the San with the instructions issued to Governor Yonge in 1800 concerning the colonists of the interior: "Consider them rather as distant Tribes dependent upon His Majesty's Government rather than as Subjects necessarily amenable to all the laws and regulations." Quoted by Giliomee, *Britse Bewind*, p.347.

importance to this colony, but highly interesting to humanity".⁷¹ Though the benefits which "humanity" would derive from the reclamation of the San were not elaborated upon it was clear that the colonists, at least, would be free from attack. The philanthropic tone of the proclamation, whilst in keeping with the contemporary climate of British public opinion, reveals, more specifically, the influence of Barrow, who had undoubtedly played a large part in drafting the proposals.⁷²

This was all very well on paper but, on the ground, the government was dependent on the co-operation of the *veldwagtmeesters*. A noteworthy feature of the Proclamation of 24 July is that *Veldwagtmeester* Jacobus Gideon Louw of the Hantam was named as a co-sponsor of the proposals, along with Floris Visser. It was obviously essential that the colonists and San of the district immediately adjacent to the Roggeveld should be included in the scheme and it was for this reason that Louw's participation was necessary. There was, however, another reason why Louw's contribution was invaluable. When Barrow visited part of Louw's district - the Onder Bokkeveld - in 1798 he remarked that there had been a state of peace between the colonists and San of the region for the last fifteen years. It is probable that this peace had developed from the agreement Gordon had reached with the San at Camdeni in January 1779.⁷³ Barrow regarded these San as traitors to their own kind, since they had assisted the colonists on commandos.⁷⁴ But whatever the nature of their involvement was it was evident that Louw, as the local *veldwagtmeester*, would have had extensive dealings with them and this experience made him a key negotiator.

The proclamation was also contingent on the introduction of a more clearly defined boundary between the San and the colonists. For this reason it has to be seen in the context of an earlier proclamation, that of 14 July 1798, which, for the first time, declared the northern boundaries of the colony.⁷⁵ They were to run from the Koussie, or Buffalo River in north-western Klein Namaqualand, along the northern edge of the Kamiesberg, the Langeberg, Kubiskou and the Spionenberg to the Roggeveld. From here the boundary would run along the Riet and Vis Rivers to the Nieuweveldberg, and from the Nieuweveld in a north-easterly line to Plettenberg's Beacon on the Seekoei River. Here the boundary would wind irregularly south-eastwards to form the

71. CA, BO 174, Original Placaat Book, 24 July, 1798, pp.80-88.

72. Macartney's role should not, however, be underestimated. For a discussion of the Macartney administration at the Cape see Boucher and Penn, *Britain at the Cape*, pp.171-183.

73. See footnote 60.

74. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp.378-380.

75. *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Vol. 5 (1795-1803), 14 July 1798, pp.138-139, (Cape Town, 1950).

eastern frontier, encompassing the Suurberg, the Bamboesberg, the Tarka, the Kagaberg and the Fish River. The explicit objective in attempting to fix these boundaries, beyond which no colonist was to hunt, settle or graze livestock, was to protect the "Caffres and the Bosjesman". As the proclamation admitted, the previous absence of fixed limits had led to several colonists "injuring the peaceful possessors of those countries, ... (reducing) the wretched natives to misery and want which at length compels them to the cruel necessity, of having recourse to robbing and various other irregularities in order to support life".⁷⁶ Here too the details and sentiments of this proclamation owed a great deal to Barrow, whom the government had sent, specifically, to ascertain the limits of colonial settlement and to draw a reliable map of the colony.⁷⁷ Taken together the two proclamations were a powerful warning that the government intended to exercise far greater control over the colonists of the frontier regions, restricting their movements so as to protect the interests of the aboriginal inhabitants beyond the borders. Unfortunately, the newly declared boundary tended to include only those areas of the colony in which permanent settlement occurred. As such, in the north-west, it ran approximately along the dividing line between the winter and summer rainfall areas. No allowance was made for the essential seasonal movement of the *trekboers* and their stock into the summer rainfall areas. Furthermore, the stipulation that hunters wishing to cross the boundary should be in possession of a pass, was an irksome requirement, unlikely to be observed by frontiersmen, who would be loath to travel hundreds of miles to Cape Town in order to obtain it from the governor.

In fact, the local *veldwagtmeesters* were the only means of enforcing the proclamation of the 14 and 24 July. How successful they would be remained to be seen. For the moment, however, the *veldwagtmeesters* of the Roggeveld and Hantam seemed willing to implement the proposed peace with the San. The process began on 8 October 1798 with the departure of Visser and fourteen other Roggevelders to explain the terms of peace to the San.⁷⁸ A second group of men followed on 27 October, bringing a contribution of sheep with them.⁷⁹ In the Hantam the distribution of sheep went ahead despite the caution of the neighbouring San (only seventy-three of whom dared accept the gifts) and the fact that robberies continued to occur in the district. A commando was called out in December and, not surprisingly, several farmers were unwilling to sponsor the peace.⁸⁰ This did not, however, halt the peace initiative. Even the colonists of Graaff-Reinet

76. Ibid.

77. Penn, "Mapping the Cape", pp.26-7..

78. CA, 1/STB 10/165, Jacobus Kruger - Landdrost, 12 Oct. 1798.

79. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Jacobus Kruger - Landdrost, 8 Nov. 1798.

80. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Jacobus Louw - Landdrost, 4 Dec. 1798.

adopted the experiment of giving sheep to the San at this time,⁸¹ evidence of a widespread concerted effort to break the continuous cycle of violence.

In January 1799 Visser was able to report from the Roggeveld that his efforts were bearing fruit. A certain San "captain" by the name of Vigilant had agreed to the peace terms and had persuaded another San leader, Danser, to journey to Visser's farm for the same purpose. Visser appointed Danser as captain and the latter, apparently, accepted the peace with "groot blydschap". The two San captains informed Visser of two other captains of the Kareeberg who were anxious to make peace; Captain Orlam and Captain Ruijter.⁸² Thus encouraged, Visser, accompanied by a group of colonists, trekked northwards to the Kareesberg in February. On their way they stopped to parley with Captains Vigilant and Orlam at the Sak River as well as a certain Captain Goedhard at Brak River. At Schietfontein in the Kareeberg Captain Ruijter and his people were visited and at Leeufontein another San captain, Platje, was persuaded to join his fellows in a large gathering at "Paardegraskloof". Here, between the Groot and Klein Sak Rivers, livestock and gifts of beads, knives, tobacco, mirrors, flints and tinder-boxes were distributed. The commodities were, no doubt, chosen so as to "impress them with a sense of the benefits arising from permanent property". The livestock was dispensed in quantities which differed according to the size of a Captain's following and included cattle as well as sheep and goats. Visser took care to count the numbers of the peace-makers and reported that there was a total of 471, made up of 284 women and children and 187 men.⁸³

Not all the San of Bushmanland were present at the treaty. There was, apparently, a great kraal of San three days' journey to the north of Schietfontein whose members did not wish to make peace. According to the other San they had "veel volk en veel geweers en veel vee"⁸⁴ and had threatened to destroy the colonists. Although the existence of this kraal was menacing the peace ceremony was not thereby postponed. If we are to credit an account of this event, written two

81. See E. Mossop, "Lives Of The Earlier Krugers Told In A Revised Genealogical Table", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1947, (Cape Town, 1947), p.249. "The burghers of Agter Sneeuberg joined in collecting cattle and sheep for presentation to such of the savages as professed willingness to ease their raids and become pastoralists. On 18.11.1798, 283 sheep, given by burghers, were collected at Grootfontein and on 17.12.1798 most of these were distributed among 118 Bushmen by Nicolaas v. der Walt, Jacob Venter, Gerrit Kruger and G. Meyburg."

82. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 10 Jan. 1799.

83. CA, 1/STB 10/152 Visser, Ockert Coetzee, Gerrit Snyman - Landdrost, no date; Visser, Ockert Coetzee, Cornelis Snyman - Landdrost, 27 Feb. 1799; Ditto; Visser, Ockert Coetzee, Snyman - Journal of expedition to the peaceful Bushmen, no date.

84. "many people and many guns and much livestock". CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 7 April 1799.

months later, by the newly arrived London Missionary Society missionary, Dr. J. van der Kemp, then:

this being brought to conclusion he (Visser) kneeled down with his men on a field, and engaged in prayer and singing of hymns. The Boschemen asked with surprise the meaning of this solemnity and having received for answer that it was thanksgiving to God, and a demonstration of joy on account of the peace with the Boshemen, they bewailed their ignorance of that God, and begged that instructors might be sent to them, to teach them the Christian religion, that they with united hearts might serve the same God with them.⁸⁵

Though it is doubtful whether the San would have expressed themselves in quite these terms it is not unlikely that they were indeed intrigued by Visser's behaviour on this occasion. Hymn singing was a fairly common communal recreation amongst the frontier farmers - it took place (accompanied by brandy drinking) before commando attacks⁸⁶ and also during the course of services of devotion⁸⁷ - but Visser was an unusually "pious colonist"⁸⁸ for his time and place. Despite the fact that there is little in his conduct before this date to suggest it, we should not discount the fact that Christian sentiments may have motivated him to work towards peace with the San. The growing influence of evangelical Christianity within the colony (discussed in the following section) had probably moved Floris Visser. Similarly, the increasing receptivity to the Christian gospel of numbers of Khoikhoi and "Bastaards", had generated an atmosphere of expectancy amongst these groups which, more than likely, they had communicated to the San.

This is not to suggest that it was the prospect of Christianity that had brought the San to parley. Visser reported that some of them, about eighty-five in number, were keen to work for the Dutch because they were unable to obtain food for themselves. One group, under the leadership of Captain Platje, was prepared to work for Visser himself. The *veldwagtmeester* realised that the San's inability to find food was a direct consequence of groups of Roggevelders trekking deep into Bushmanland with wagons in order to shoot game. These hunting parties, as well as the custom of driving stock into the area, caused the utmost damage to the San. The major culprits, according to Visser, were the colonists of the Onder Roggeveld and Visser suggested that, in future, they be prohibited from going beyond the Renoster River.⁸⁹ In the meantime, Visser was

85. Extracts from the *London Missionary Society*, Vol. 1, Van Der Kemp at the Cape, 28 April 1799, pp.366-367.

86. Barrow, *Travels*, p.270.

87. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.447.

88. Van der Kemp's words, *London Missionary Society*, Vol. 1, 28 April 1799, p.366.

89. This detail is an indication of the rivalry which existed between the *trekboers* of the Agter Roggeveld (like Visser) and the Onder Roggeveld (like Maritz) for the resources of Bushmanland.

agreeable to allowing destitute San to work for the colonists provided that they received the same wages as "de orlamme bijwoorde hottentotten" and that neither they nor their wives and children should be mistreated in any way. A further proviso was that they should, with Visser's approval, be free to remove themselves to another employer or return to their own country. This would, of course, be conditional on their having fulfilled their contractual agreement, details of which would be recorded by Visser who hoped, thereby, to maintain "order and accord".⁹⁰

On 7 April, in accordance with the governor's wishes, Visser despatched three of the San captains to the Cape. The three in question - Vigilant, Orlam and Platje - went voluntarily, and Visser was able to report that, in his district, the peace was being observed. This was not the case in the Hantam where, in February, *Veldwagtmeester* Van Wijk reported that since the San had been given livestock they had been stealing more than ever. The outlying farmers went in constant fear of their lives and Van Wijk could think of no better remedy than raising a commando.⁹¹ This regional setback was not, however, allowed to jeopardise the promising developments elsewhere and the fortuitous arrival of missionaries of the London Missionary Society at Cape Town, coinciding with the visit of the three captains of Bushmanland, introduced new prospects for the "civilisation" of the San.

90. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser, Ockert Coetzee, Gerrit Snyman - Landdrost, no date; Visser - Landdrost, 7 April 1799.

91. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 7 April 1799; Johannes van Wijk - Landdrost, 18 Feb. 1799.

The Sak River Mission, 1799-1801

THE COMING OF THE MISSIONARIES

On the last day of March, 1799, four brethren of the London Missionary Society (LMS) disembarked at Cape Town in order to commence missionary work in the Colony. Under the leadership of the Dutchman, Dr. J. van der Kemp, the group was determined to spread the Christian gospel amongst the heathen of the interior. So vast was the missionary field before them that a division of forces was deemed to be necessary. Van der Kemp and Edmond, one of his English colleagues, resolved to go beyond the Colony's eastern frontier to minister to the Xhosa. The two other missionaries, Kicherer, a Dutchman, and Edwards, an Englishman, planned to journey to Klein Namaqualand. On learning of the state of turmoil existing in that region (see chapter ten above) they were, however, obliged to make other plans. At this moment Providence (for thus it seemed to them) showed them the path they should take by arranging for the arrival of the three San captains whom Visser had sent, who "expressed their earnest desire that proper persons might come and reside among them, who would afford them those valuable instructions which would enable them to become as rich and happy as their neighbours".¹

It is noteworthy that, right from the start, a connection was made (by Kicherer, if not the San) between Christianity and a more prosperous life-style. Van der Kemp, reflecting the perceived opinion of his day, speculated that the "Boschemen" nation was "perhaps the most savage and cruel in the whole earth". Despite this negative assessment, he was suitably impressed by "their ardent desire to leave off all acts of criminal violence for ever and to be instructed in the knowledge and service of the God of the Christians".² It was therefore resolved to establish a mission amongst the San. William Edwards was keen to answer the call and Johannes Kicherer, an ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, after appealing to "the lot" in order to establish the Lord's will, was chosen to join him. The three San captains, meanwhile, attached

1. J. Kicherer, "The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of his Mission To The Hottentots", in *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, No.1, Vol. II, (London, 1804) p.2; Van der Kemp, *LMS*, Vol. 1, May 13 1799, p.368; J. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions In South Africa*, (London, 1911) pp.101-2. For the most recent study on Van der Kemp see I.H. Enklaar, *Life And Work of Dr. J. Th. Van Der Kemp, 1747-1811*, (Cape Town, 1989). Details concerning Van der Kemp, as well as the other missionaries, are to be found in the *LMS Register of Missionaries, 1796-1928*. For a recent account of LMS mission activity amongst the Khoikhoi of the eastern Cape see Elizabeth Elbourne, "To Colonize The Mind: Evangelical Missionaries in Britain and the Eastern Cape 1790-1837", (D.Phil., Oxford, 1991).

2. Van der Kemp, *LMS*, p.368.

themselves to the missionaries, staying with them at their lodgings, and adhering so closely that Van der Kemp remarked: "we find it difficult to separate ourselves from them."³

One of the San, Orlam, was, in fact, a Kora and, as his name suggests, he had already been exposed to a measure of European culture. The other two are named in the documents as "Vigilant" and "Slaparm". Whether Slaparm was the same individual as Platje, the man named in Visser's letter of 7 April, is not clear but his name suggests that he too had departed from the traditional values of his society.⁴ The three captains eventually left Cape Town on 13 April, bound for Floris Visser and bearing a letter from the fiscal which instructed the *veldwagtmeester* to send a wagon to Roodezand so as to provide the transportation necessary for the missionaries' conveyance to Bushmanland. The government was, therefore, putting its assistance behind the missionaries, and its interest in the project also emerges in Van der Kemp's disclosure that Edwards was "not only to take their spiritual concerns at heart, but also to correspond about their political concerns with Governor Dundas at the particular request of his excellency".⁵ It is clear that the administration planned to use the missionaries as political agents who would assist in the implementation of the government's frontier policy and, for this reason, the local *veldwagtmeesters* and colonists were instructed to render every possible assistance to the men of God.

All four of the missionaries left Cape Town together on 22 May, travelling northwards to visit the Rev. M.C. Vos at Roodezand and making an excursion to the Moravian mission at Baviaans Kloof.⁶ By doing so they were making a pilgrimage to the sources of local evangelical missionary endeavour, which had predated their arrival in the colony, and which had had a considerable influence in creating a favourable climate for the LMS initiative. It is important to stress that the spirit of religious enthusiasm was already moving within the colony and, before considering the LMS mission to the San, it will be necessary to provide a brief assessment of the impact of earlier evangelical work.

3. Ibid; Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.1-2.

4. Van der Kemp, p.368, has the name "Orciam" but this, when compared to Visser's letter, is obviously a misprint of "Orlam" or "Oorlam". See CA, I/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 7 April 1799. The name "Slaparm" can mean, literally, "Weak arm" or "Lame arm" but the /Xam also used it to describe someone who did not share out meat equally. A *k"waken //kung* (decayed arm), was someone who was ungenerous about food. See Hewitt, *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the southern San*, p.109.

5. Van der Kemp, *LMS*, p.368.

6. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.2-3.

M.C. Vos, the minister of the church at Roodezand from 1794, was one of a small group of men within the Dutch Reformed Church who saw it as part of their Christian duty to spread the gospel to the heathens.⁷ The practice of baptising children (and, indeed, adults) of "Bastaard-Hottentot" or slave parentage had been taking place, on a limited scale, at the Roodezand church since 1774.⁸ Such baptisms had doubtless been taking place long before this date - but "invisibly".⁹ It was the new emphasis on classification, coinciding with the General Commando and the institution of the "inboek" system, which encouraged officials to note the racial pedigree of their congregation more closely.¹⁰

Though the numbers of such Christians must have been few they were able to join in the devotions of the Roodezand congregation thanks, largely, to the approbation of a series of ministers who were either Dutch born, Dutch educated, or both. It is true that the initiator of these developments, the Reverend Remmerus Harders, was forced into early retirement, due to mental illness,¹¹ soon after the inauguration of these seemingly liberal policies. But that his example was no mental aberration is proved by the conduct of his successor, Johannes Kuys, who continued to baptise adults and children of mixed parentage until replaced by M.C. Vos in 1794.¹²

Vos, who was himself partially of slave descent,¹³ had been born at the Cape in 1759. As a teenager he became convinced that he should become a minister and preach the gospel within his own land. He claims to have been especially concerned with the souls of the slaves and, after

7. M.C. Vos, *Merkwaardig verhaal aangaande het leven en de lotgevallen van Michiel Christiaan Vos*, (Amsterdam, 1824); Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.67-9, 76-79; P.S. de Jongh, "Sendingwerk In Die Landdrosdistrikte Stellenbosch En Tulbagh (Sedert 1822 Worcester) 1799-1830", (M.A., Stellenbosch, 1968) pp.5-10; *Gedenkschriften Van het Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*, Eerst Deel, (Rotterdam, 1801), Extracts from M.C. Vos's letters, pp.100-111; A. Boeseken and M. Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, chapter 10.

8. Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, p.102.

9. On the issue of the baptism of slaves, people of slave descent, and people of mixed descent see H.F. Heese, *Groep Sonder Giense*, (Bellville, 1984) pp.31-35; R. Elphick and R. Shell, "Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, (Cape Town, 1989) pp.185-191. I do not mean to suggest that baptism of people of "non-European" descent was always "invisible", i.e. not recorded, before 1774. Though infrequent, clearly, it occurred (particularly in Cape Town). My point is that it was not always considered necessary to stigmatise "non-white" Christians (particularly if they were the marriage partners of those of European descent or children of a European parent) in the baptism records.

10. See chapter seven above for the influence of the General Commando on formalising racial categorisation in the colony.

11. Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, p.101. By a resolution of 23 June 1792 slaves professing the Christian religion were declared admissible to the communion of the church. *Papers Relative*, p.21. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, p.65.

12. Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, pp.102-103.

13. A fact stressed by H.F. Heese but overlooked by other commentators. See H.F. Heese, *Groep*, p.32.

overcoming considerable hardships, qualified as a minister in Utrecht before returning to the Cape to take up his post at Roodezand. The drift of his thoughts was clearly indicated by the choice of the text for his inaugural sermon - Mark 16, 15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Fitting his actions to these words Vos instituted evening classes for the instruction of slaves and Khoikhoi in the benefits of Christianity. He also produced a catechism for "slaves and other heathens", copies of which were distributed as far as twenty days journey from Roodezand. In addition he undertook extensive pastoral journeys, as far afield as the Roggeveld and Graaff-Reinet, in order to minister to the colonists.¹⁴ It is more than likely that it was during the course of these excursions that Floris Visser heard, and responded to, the message of the peripatetic minister.

Vos's warm endorsement of the credo of evangelism was the consequence of his exposure, whilst in Holland, to an awakening spirit of missionary endeavour which was taking place throughout Western Europe. He was not the first Dutch Reformed minister at the Cape to be inspired by these developments for, in 1786, a young Hollander called Helperus Ritzema van Lier was appointed as minister to the Cape Town congregation. In a sermon he delivered in May, 1789 he too stressed that the gospel should be proclaimed "to every human being, however savage, ignorant, degraded or sinful he be".¹⁵ Van Lier had the Khoikhoi and slaves in mind, and, had he not gone to an early grave in 1793, would doubtless have done much to propagate the gospel amongst the heathen. As it was he had done enough to establish a small circle of mission friends amongst the colonists who would later lend much support to the LMS and act as founder members of the South African Missionary Society.¹⁶

The first of these mission societies was established in London in 1795 along inter-denominational lines. Apart from the inspiration which it drew from the broader currents of the religious revival present in England at that time - currents which flowed most strongly in Methodism, the new

14. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.67-69; Boeseken and Cairns, *Secluded Valley*, pp.103-108; De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.8-10.

15. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, p.63. For Van Lier see T.N. Hanekom, *Helperus Ritzema Van Lier: Die Lewensbeeld Van 'n Kaapse Predikant Uit die 18de Eeu* (Cape Town, 1959).

16. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.61-65; B. Kriger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms*, pp.47-48. Van Lier also had a strong, though indirect, influence on Kicherer. The latter man was responsible for publishing the mystical Christian meditations of Van Lier's sister, Catharina Aldegonda, to whom he was engaged before she died on 22 September 1801. See Hanekom, *Van Lier*, pp.299-300. Mention should be made of such members as Van Zulch, Jacobus Vos, C.P. Slotsboo and Mathilde Smith. Van Zulch (or Van Sulk) had about 300 Khoi under his tuition at the Tygerberg in 1799 of whom, he hoped, "between thirty and forty had truly received from our Saviour grace to be faithful". *Transactions*, No.1, Vol. II, p.325; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.64-65.

Dissent and, in its parent movement, the Evangelicals - the LMS was specifically inspired by the vision of one of its founding members, Thomas Haweis.¹⁷ It was he who preached the first sermon to the Missionary Society on 22 September 1795 and who chose to expatiate on the moral and spiritual degradation of those societies of the South Seas (particularly Tahiti) which the voyages of Captain Cook (amongst others) had revealed to the West. Despite the idyllic circumstances in which these people lived they were occupants of an Eden after the Fall. "Yet untutored offspring of fallen nature!" Haweis exclaimed, "how are you to be pitied." There was thus, from the outset, a rejection of the ideas of "noble savagism" and "sentimental primitivism" by the members of the LMS. As Bernard Smith explains, the evangelists "had no doubts about the superiority of Christian civilisation over other forms of society"¹⁸ and considered it a pressing obligation upon Christians to make the gospel known, not only in the South Seas but in all other areas of the globe where benighted heathen were to be found.

News of the LMS reached Van der Kemp in Holland and he forthwith offered the society his services. His spiritual credentials, as well as the fact that he was a Scots-trained medical doctor and a Dutch speaker, made him seem ideally suited to lead a mission to the recently acquired British colony at the Cape. Before his departure he was instrumental in establishing a sister society - the Netherlands Missionary Society - in his native country and ties between the two organisations were close.¹⁹ On his arrival in South Africa in 1799 he delivered a letter of exhortation, addressed to the Christians of the colony, from the brethren of the LMS. The letter was read to the congregations of Cape Town and Roodezand by their respective ministers in April and was greeted with much enthusiasm. It was nothing less than a call to establish a local missionary society, similar to the Netherlands Missionary Society, in the Cape. Thanks to the pre-existing receptivity to such an idea, the active support of the Reverend Vos, and the generous donations of a number of local Christians, the South African Missionary Society was established on 22 April 1799. The first article of its constitution proclaimed: "The object of this Society shall be to promote, by all means which lie within its power, the extension of Christ's Kingdom among the unenlightened in this Colony, and among the heathen both within and without its bounds."²⁰ This hearteningly rapid and enthusiastic response by significant sections of the Cape's Christian

17. R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, Vol. I, (London, 1899); E. Halevy, *A History Of The English People In 1815* (London, 1924; reprint 1987) pp.389-90. See also J. and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago, 1991), pp.43-85, and Elbourne, "To Colonize the Mind" for a discussion of the constituent parts of the consciousness of LMS missionaries at the end of the eighteenth century.

18. B. Smith, *European Vision And The South Pacific 1768-1850* (Oxford, 1960), pp.106-107.

19. Enklaar, *Van der Kemp*, pp.1-68.

20. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.92-93.

community is evidence that a religious revival was simmering under the surface of colonial life. Nowhere was this more evident than amongst one of the groups comprising the intended beneficiaries of the evangelical mission: the Khoikhoi. And no institution had done more to raise their expectations than the Moravian mission at Baviaans Kloof.

The Moravians had been the first to establish a mission to the Khoikhoi.²¹ Between 1737 and 1743 Georg Schmidt had laboured against loneliness, depression and the hostility of the official church to establish a community of Christian Khoikhoi at Baviaans Kloof.²² Worn out by his efforts he returned to Europe and it was not until 1792 that circumstances permitted the return of the Moravians. One of their Bishops, Reichel, had visited Cape Town in 1787 and met Van Lier. The young minister's enthusiasm for missionary enterprise encouraged Reichel to renew the mission to the Khoikhoi and, once permission had been obtained from the *Heren XVII* in the Netherlands, three brethren were appointed to take up the task. As soon as the three - Marsveld, Schwinn and Kuhnel - began to give lessons in 1793 it became apparent that there was a much greater hunger for instruction on the part of the Khoikhoi than had been the case during Schmidt's mission. The millenarian unrest amongst the Khoikhoi of the Swellendam district and Riviersonderend in 1788 was an indication that at least some of the teachings of Christianity had been absorbed and transformed by the local Khoikhoi to meet their own needs and that there was a strong spirit of yearning for religious revelation.²³ It is surely no coincidence that this movement occurred in the area where Georg Schmidt had first preached the gospel to the Khoikhoi. We may assume that his words had not been entirely forgotten by those who had heard them, and that they had communicated the message of salvation to others who had little but hope to sustain them.²⁴

Despite the active hostility of the surrounding colonists, who sought to "debar the migration of the Hottentots to Baviaans Kloof and to keep them on their farms, illiterate and dependent", the

21. In fact, when the eighteenth century opened, and for many years to come, the Moravian brethren were the only Protestant missionaries in the entire world.

22. See Kriger, *Pear Tree*, pp.1-39; H.C. Bredekamp, "Die Verhouding Tussen Africa Christian En Georg Schmidt, 1737-1743", paper presented at Instituut Vir Historiese navorsing, University of the Western Cape, Oct. 1987; H.C. Bredekamp and J.L. Hattingh, (eds.), *Das Tagebuch und die Briefe van Georg Schmidt dem ersten Missionar in Sudafrika (1737-1744)/ Dagboek en briewe van Georg Schmidt eerste sendeling in Suid Afrika (1737-1744)* (Bellville, 1981).

23. See p.273-75 above.

24. Christian ideas had no doubt circulated amongst the Khoikhoi from the earliest years of colonial contact. Valentyn, for instance, recorded that he had had a conversation with a Khoikhoi who had been trained by a Dutch clergyman, Van Kalden, and that the Khoikhoi was well informed about the Christian religion. In Theophilus Hahn, *Tsuni -//Goam, The Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), p.39.

mission grew dramatically.²⁵ By 1796 Baviaans Kloof was, after Cape Town, the largest settlement in the colony and, by 1799, the more benevolent attitude of the British authorities had encouraged its development into a large village where 1 234 people lived in 228 dwellings. British visitors to Baviaans Kloof, such as Barrow and the influential Lady Anne Barnard, were most impressed by the order and industry of the settlement. The devotional gatherings, in particular, impressed observers, who commented favourably on the advances which Christianity was making amongst the Khoikhoi congregation. "Bastaards", slaves and even the neighbouring colonists also attended divine services at the institution so that, by 1799, its reputation stood very high with the authorities.²⁶

In fact, in December 1798, before the arrival of the LMS missionaries, Governor Dundas had requested the Moravian brethren to send one of their number northwards, at the government's expense, to negotiate with the San. The San had, apparently, asked for a mission station like Baviaans Kloof to be established in their midst. Although the Moravians were keen to respond to this challenge the sudden recall of one of their members to Germany prevented them from preceding the LMS as missionaries in Bushmanland. The incident does, however, suggest that the fame of Baviaans Kloof had spread beyond the colony's northern borders and raised interest amongst the San. It also indicates that the government was proposing to utilise missionaries to implement its frontier policies even before the arrival of Van der Kemp and his colleagues.²⁷

When the LMS missionaries visited Vos's church and Baviaans Kloof in May 1799 they were, therefore, paying their respects to the pioneers in the field. They also received invaluable practical information as to what had been and what could be achieved. Thus instructed, and once Edmond and Edwards had been ordained by Vos, the missionaries were ready to go their separate ways; Van der Kemp and Edmond to the east, and Kicherer and Edwards to the north. The latter pair set

25. Kriger, *Pear Tree*, pp.47-75; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.77, 79. For a more detailed consideration of relationships between colonists and the Khoikhoi of Baviaans Kloof see Russel S. Viljoen, "Moravian Missionaries, Khoikhoi Labour and the Overberg Colonists at the end of the VOC era: 1792-1796", (Paper presented at I.H.R conference on the History of Christianity in South Africa, University of the Western Cape, 1992).

26. Kriger, *Pear Tree*, pp.75-85; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.79-90; Barrow, *Travels*, pp.351-355; A. M. Lewin Robinson, (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Barnard To Henry Dundas*, (Cape Town, 1973) pp.118-125. See also A.M.L. Robinson, "The Baviaans Kloof Mission at the time of the Capture of the Cape in 1795", *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, Vol. 8, no.2, Dec. 1953.

27. Kriger, pp.82-83. This was not, as a matter of interest, the first suggestion of a mission to the San. Early in 1794, at a time when one of the neighbouring farmers coveted the land on which the settlement of Baviaans Kloof stood, the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch suggested, by way of resolving the dispute, that the Moravians should move to the San, where they would be more useful (Kriger, *Pear Tree*, p.66). In 1795 a commando of antagonistic Swellendam burghers, under Louis Pisani, sought to drive the missionaries away. Pisani suggested that the Moravians "should go to tame the Bushmen" (Kriger, pp.70-71).

out on 25 June for Visser's farm in the Roggeveld, provided, by helpful colonists, with a wagon and oxen. During the fortnight it took them to reach Visser, farmers came from far and near to listen to the gospel. At Visser's farm itself, where they lingered two or three weeks, there were further signs of religious enthusiasm for their Sunday services attracted twenty-two wagon loads of people "besides many on horseback, some of whom came four days journey to hear the word of God".²⁸

On 5 July Kicherer and Edwards left for Bushmanland. They were accompanied by a not inconsiderable group of fifty men, six wagons full of provisions, sixty oxen and two hundred sheep. Visser, who was a member of the party, planned to proceed further northwards to the Groot Kraal in an attempt to make peace with its still hostile adherents.²⁹ Also part of the escort was Jacob Kruger, the *veldcornet* of the Klein Roggeveld, who led a group of twelve men and brought with him the contributions of his district.³⁰ The first San were encountered after a week's journey from Visser's farm. On 6 August, one day's journey north of the Sak River, a promising spot for a settlement was found. There were two fine springs of water and a stretch of ground which seemed suitable for cultivation. Encouraged by a visit from a group of about twenty San the missionaries decided to call the place Blyde Vooruitzichtfontein (or, simply, Blyde Vooruitzicht), and with the help of the accompanying colonists, began to build a mission station.³¹

Despite the gifts of labour and livestock, and despite the hunger for the word of God, it should not be thought that all the Roggevelders were in complete harmony with the objectives of either their government or the missionaries. Jacob Kruger reported that, although he had ordered eight of his burghers to be present, only six had arrived; and whereas he had ordered twenty oxen, only ten had been given. Most uncharitable of all was Martinus Coort who proclaimed:

dat hy tot de bevredigte bossimans niets wil doen en ook voor de sendelinge maar wel dat die sendelinge mogte dood geslage worde en dat alde Bossimans dood waar.³²

28. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.3-5.

29. CA, I/STB 10/152. Visser-Landdrost, 23 July 1799; Kicherer, "Narrative", p.5.

30. CA, I/STB 10/152. Kruger-Landdrost, Journaal van de uijttocht met de Sendelinge om die Luyde te bringe tot haar bescheyde Plaats waa - die luyde haar verbleyf soude neme, 24 July-15 Aug. 1799.

31. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.5-6.

32. "That he would do nothing for the peaceful bushmen nor the missionaries but (wished) that the missionaries would be killed and that all the Bushmen were dead." CA, I/STB 10/152, Kruger - Landdrost, 24 Aug. 1799.

There were also those colonists who, like those opposed to the Baviaans Kloof mission, feared that the spread of literacy would undermine their authority.³³

Undeterred by such animosity the missionaries presided over the preparation of a vegetable garden and the construction of a reed hut for their habitation. The latter structure fell far short of their ideals and, in fact, fell down completely at a later date when they unwisely tried to give it a clay covering. The decision to grow vegetables was partly determined by a desire to achieve self-sufficiency and partly by the idea of teaching the San the benefits of agriculture, just as the Khoikhoi at Baviaans Kloof had responded to the example of the Moravians.³⁴ Unfortunately, as the London missionaries would soon discover, Bushmanland was like the stony ground of the parable where seed, whether spiritual or botanical, would struggle to take root.

THE FIRST MISSION TO THE SAN

On 12 August the colonists departed leaving Kicherer and Edwards to fend for themselves. They were not, however, completely abandoned for Visser's son, Gerrit,³⁵ remained with them, as well as a colonist by the name of Cornelis Kramer. This latter individual had been appointed as a teacher to the Roodezand district in June and had been given permission to join the LMS missionaries as an assistant by his sponsors, the South African Missionary Society.³⁶ Numbers

33. A footnote to Kicherer's "Narrative", p.42, reads as follows: "Mr. K. informs us, that the Dutch Colonists differ much in their moral character, and in their disposition to the Missionary cause. 'The more moral and serious', said he, 'gave me every assistance in their power, and I can never be sufficiently thankful for it. Those who opposed us were generally uncivilized and ungodly men, who were led astray by our enemies, and pretended to suspect me of political views. The better sort of the Settlers instruct their Hottentots and their Slaves, and through their instrumentality, some have been savingly converted. But those Farmers who are notoriously wicked are afraid that the heathen will become too wise by instruction, and so reprove them for their wicked works.'" In 1795 the revolting burghers of Swellendam had complained. "We will not permit any Moravians to live here and instruct the Hottentots, for as there are many Christians who receive no instruction, it is not proper that the Hottentots should be made wiser than the Christians, but they must remain what they were formerly." A.M.L. Robinson, "Baviaans Kloof", p.57.

34. The insistent equation between Christianity, civilisation and cultivation was to become a firmly entrenched idea of nineteenth century missionaries to southern Africa. Needless to say the San were even less likely to make a smooth transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural production than they were to pastoralism. In 1817, for instance the LMS missionary James Read declared: "We take a plough with us. Let it be remembered that in Africa the Bible and the plough go together." Later, speaking of the establishment of a mission to the San at the White Kei river in 1839, Read wrote: "The first thing thought of, after the Bible and Missionaries, was a plough; the Bible in one hand, and the plough in the other." As Miklos Szalay says: "Der Pflug war für die Missionare ein Symbol der 'Zivilization'". Quotations from M. Szalay, *Ethnologie und Geschichte: Zur Grundlegung einer ethnologischen Geschichtsschreibung Mit Beispielen aus der Geschichte der Khoi-San in Suidafrika* (Berlin, 1983), footnote 113, p.218.

35. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Kriger - Landdrost, Journal 24 July-15 Aug. 1799.

36. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, p.96; De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", p.229; LMS, *Register of Missionaries*, p.69.

of San now began to approach, attracted more by handouts of the "irresistible herb" tobacco (as Kicherer frankly admitted) than by the magnetism of the Christian message. The missionaries' mutton supplies were a further enticement and so too were the "little presents" which were distributed in order to "excite a spirit of industry in them". Initially, there were about thirty San at the mission, but progress in "conveying the first instruction to their untutored minds" (as Kicherer put it) was slow.³⁷

Kicherer's account of his mission contains one of the earliest and fullest descriptions of San culture through the eyes of a European and for this reason bears quoting at some length. As a Christian evangelist he necessarily believed that he was dealing with "ignoble" rather than "noble savages"³⁸ and his description of their culture is therefore extremely unsympathetic. It should, however, be acknowledged that he, unlike many of the colonists, saw the San as being potentially capable of receiving the "distinguished trophies" of God's almighty grace. The absence of these "trophies" was, for the meantime, clearly signalled by their manner of life which was "wretched and disgusting".

They delight to smear their bodies with the fat of animals, mingled with a powder which makes it shine.³⁹ They are utter strangers to cleanliness, as they never wash their bodies, but suffer the dirt to accumulate, so that it will hang a considerable length from their elbows. Their huts are formed by digging a hole in the earth about three feet deep, and then making a roof of reeds, which is however insufficient to keep off the rains. Here they lie close together like pigs in a sty. They are extremely lazy, so that nothing will rouse them to action, but excessive hunger. They will continue several days together without food, rather than be at pains to procure it. When constrained to sally forth for prey, they are dexterous in destroying the various beasts which abound in the country; but when they cannot procure these, they make shift to live upon snakes, mice, and the most detestable creatures they can find. There are some spontaneous productions of the earth of the bulbous kind which they also eat....; There are also some little berries which are eatable, and which the women go out to gather, but the men are too idle to do this.⁴⁰

37. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.6.

38. For the development and transformation of the idea of the "noble savage" to the idea of the "ignoble savage" see Edward Dudley and Maximilian Novak, (eds.), *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, (Pittsburgh, 1972). See also Hayden White's articles, "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea" and "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish", in his book *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, (Baltimore, 1978). Bernard Smith's *European Vision And the South Pacific 1768-1850* is excellent on this subject.

39. Probably a form of specularite. In Afrikaans known as "blink loodklip" and in Tswana as "sebito". This item was an important item of trade and exchange in the northern frontier zone and was used by African societies as an adornment. The Tlhaping controlled a large deposit of the mineral at a place called Blinkklip (Tsantsabane). Legassick, "The Griqua", p. 253.

40. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.7.

Here are all the distinguishing features of a people who inhabit a post-Lapsarian world, who have "no idea whatever of the Supreme Being" and who "practice no kind of worship". The environment of Bushmanland did not enable its inhabitants to enjoy a languid ease similar to that of the Pacific islanders yet, despite this, the San contrived to be as indolent as possible, feasting, (as if in debased parody of the Tahitians with their "fragrant groves which cover them from the sultry beams of day, (and) afford them food and clothing; whilst the sea offers continual plenty of its inexhaustible stores; and the day passes in ease and affluence, and the night in music and dancing"⁴¹) on the foulest productions of nature. Nor was there much to admire in the family life of the San.

They are total strangers to domestic happiness. The men have several wives, but conjugal affection is little known. They take no great care of their children, and never correct them except in a fit of rage, when they almost kill them by severe usage. In a quarrel between father and mother, or the several wives of a husband, the defeated party wreaks his or her revenge on the child of the conqueror, which in general loses its life. Tame Hottentots seldom destroy their offspring, except in a fit of passion, but the Boschemen will kill their children without remorse on various occasions, as when they are ill shaped, when they are in want of food, when the father of a child has forsaken its mother, or when obliged to flee from the Farmers or others: in which case they will strangle them, smother them, chase them away in the desert, or bury them alive. There are instances of parents throwing their tender offspring to the hungry Lion, who stands roaring before their cavern, refusing to depart until some peace-offering be made to him. In general their children cease to be the objects of a mother's care, as soon as they are able to crawl about in the field. They go out every morning, and when they return in the evening, an old sheep's skin to lie upon, and a little milk or a piece of meat, if they have it, is all they have to expect. In some few instances, however, you meet with a spark of natural affection, which places them on a level with the brute creation.

The Boschemen frequently forsake their aged relations, when removing from place to place for the sake of hunting. In this case they leave the old person with a piece of meat and an ostrich egg-shell full of water; as soon as this little stock is exhausted, the poor deserted creature must perish by hunger, or become the prey of the wild beasts. Many of these wild Hottentots live by plunder and murder, and are guilty of the most horrid and atrocious actions.⁴²

The above description, a heartless distortion of certain practices which, doubtless, occurred occasionally within the hard pressed hunter-gatherer communities,⁴³ does little to illuminate the

41. From Thomas Hawers's first sermon to the LMS., 22 Sept 1795. Quoted by B. Smith, *European Vision*, pp.106-107.

42. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.8.

43. Gordon, travelling up the west coast in December 1785, noted that in the vicinity of Jakhals Vlei: "Josias Engelbregt showed me a little bush where the Hottentots at one time had put into a wooden byre and fenced in a

crucial centrality of kin-ordered structures within San society; or the essential role loyalty and affection played in maintaining these structures. It is possible that when Kicherer wrote these lines, which were addressed to the Directors of the LMS, he was, in a sense, pandering to their expectations of "savage" societies. Haweis and his fellows had been horrified by the accounts they had heard of sexual promiscuity, human sacrifice and infanticide amongst the Pacific Islanders.⁴⁴ No doubt Kicherer, his mind full of their exhortations, was predisposed to discover the same sins in the San.

There was obviously an urgent need to deliver these people from the darkness of ignorance. Kicherer and Edwards therefore instituted a daily routine of prayer, scripture reading, hymn singing and, for the children, instruction in the Dutch language. A large part of each day was also set aside for manual work - building or gardening - and, in the evenings, the missionaries struggled as best they could to communicate their knowledge of divine things. Language was the first obstacle to be surmounted for the missionaries could not speak /Xam and there were few, if any, of the San who spoke Dutch. In fact, Edwards himself spoke very little Dutch and, before too long, "wishing to teach the Hottentots his native English, left us to go a little further into the country".⁴⁵ Kicherer does not explain how it was that instruction was effected before the eventual arrival of a good interpreter. It is likely that there were some Khoikhoi shepherds, unacknowledged in his account, who could communicate with the San. But Gerrit Visser, also unacknowledged in the account, may have helped in this regard for we know from another source that he, even more than his father, was completely fluent in the /Xam language.⁴⁶ It was,

very old woman - who had no friends or children - with an ostrich eggshell of water and some food, to let her die there and thus be rid of her. Josias, coming past there with one of these Hottentots (or) Strand Bosjemans, named 'Covrasi', had been shown this by him. He had found the woman dead. He had known her. Her name was 'Kwabees' and he had thought she was more than a hundred years old." Raper and Boucher, *Gordon*, Vol. 2, 23 Dec. 1785, pp.402-403.

44. "But amidst these enchanting scenes, savage nature still feasts on the flesh of its prisoners - appeases its Gods with human sacrifices - whole societies of men and women live promiscuously, and murder every infant born amongst them." Hawers, in B. Smith, *European Vision*, p.107.

45. "For some months brother Edwards continued with us, after which he settled himself a few miles distance from us, with his Boschman people, notwithstanding which we keep a continual communication with each other. This he thought was most advisable, as that place was larger and more fruitful than ours; and as it would be more easy to instruct the people in the English language, when they were separated from those who taught the Dutch. This went on very well; the only difficulty was, that he had no interpreter with him, but to facilitate his design, we sent him occasionally ours." *Transactions*, No.1, Vol. II, p.331; Kicherer, "Narrative", p.11. Edwards had a predilection for wandering off on his own for, on the journey to Bushmanland, on 5 August 1799, he had got lost for an uncomfortable number of hours, *Transactions*, No.1, Vol. II, p.327. It is also quite probable that Edwards did not like Kicherer. See note 59 ahead.

46. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan. 1805 - 7 Jan. 1805, pp.50-56. Lichenstein, on his trip to the Tswana in 1805, was joined by Gerrit Visser, whom he described as: "a youth of only eighteen years of age, whose father had in the course of his life, carried on frequent negotiations with the Bosjesmans, and had succeeded, in the year 1796 (sic),

however, with the arrival of Willem Fortuin, a Khoikhoi, and his wife (unnamed), a San, that progress began to be made. Both spoke Dutch and both "were rather more civilised than the people in general". Willem helped with the garden whilst his wife, as well as acting as Kicherer's housekeeper, became the principal interpreter.⁴⁷ The missionaries did not, themselves, make an attempt to learn /Xam since "their language is so very difficult to learn that no-one can spell or write the same".⁴⁸

As the number of San attending the mission increased Kicherer found it necessary, "for the sake of distinguishing one from another, to give them names, which I wrote with chalk on their backs; accordingly when any one of them approached me, the first thing he did was to show me his shoulders".⁴⁹ What the San thought of this strange custom is not recorded but Kicherer does give some indication of their reception of Christianity. Alongside their predictable amazement were, he argued, tokens of the workings of grace on their hearts. Some began to pray to God, losing sleep for sorrow on account of their sins or prostrating themselves on the ground in an excess of unworthiness. Kicherer, given the "natural inconstancy" of his people, remained sceptical, and admitted that:

we had reason to doubt the sincerity of some of them, as there was no suitable alteration in their lives, but much pharisaical ostentation, mechanical profession and, we feared, interested views; for some of them seemed to pray, with no other design than to obtain a piece of Tobacco from us.⁵⁰

So long as the supplies of tobacco and livestock remained Kicherer was assured of a docile audience. But, despite the progress made on the vegetable garden, the mission was far from being self-sufficient. In any event, the San proved to be "no great admirers of vegetables", even when

in establishing a peace between them and the inhabitants of the Roggeveld. From him our young man had learnt the language of these savages: he had always been his father's companion in his journeys".

47. In a letter of 18 March 1800 Kicherer wrote: "By a kind direction of Providence, we have in our service two interpreters, who are a bastard Hottentot and his wife. They are natives of the Boschmen's land; but have served under Christians, and have learned the Dutch language. The wife's mother we found amongst these wild people, who now also serves for livelihood." *Transactions*, No.1, Vol. II, p.333; also "Reizen En Verrichtingen Van Den Zendeling J.J. Kicherer", in *Gedenkschriften van het Nederlandsch Zendeing-Genootschap*, Tweede Deel (Rotterdam, 1805), pp.231-232. "Willein Petrus Fortuin, 47, and his wife Catharina Dorothea, and three children under 7 were all baptised at Sak River towards the end of 1802 (Dooptboek der gemeente Jesu Christi aan de Zakrivier, NGK Archives)." Personal communication from Karel Schoeman.

48. *Transactions*, No.1, Vol. II, p.333. Instead, once Jacobus Scholtz joined the mission, Kicherer spent his spare time instructing him in Latin! "Reizen En Verrichtingen Van Den Zendeling J.J. Kicherer", *Gedenkschriften Van het Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*, Tweede Deel (Rotterdam, 1805) p.239.

49. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.11.

50. Ibid.

Kicherer saved them the trouble of cooking them and brought them to the huts ready to eat. For supplies of meat the mission was dependent on donations from well-disposed colonists who, fortunately, were forthcoming. In October, for instance, as stocks ran dangerously low, Blydevooruitzicht was visited by the Roggeveld farmer Frans Maritz who gave the mission a bull, thirty sheep, flour, salt and other provisions. Even Maritz's Khoikhoi servants donated some of their sheep, evidence of the support which they, at least, wished to lend to the propagation of the gospel. And, at Christmas time, more gifts were given by a number of farmers who visited the mission in order to participate in holy communion.⁵¹

Further to the north the San of the Groote Kraal were not as well disposed to the mission. Visser's attempt to make peace with them had obviously failed for in September, and then again in November and December, he warned the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch that he had received intelligence that the Groote Kraal was planning to attack Blydevooruitzicht.⁵² Fortunately for the missionaries, the attack failed to materialise but the constant threat from the Groote Kraal, as well as the menace of the more distant Afrikaner gang,⁵³ may have had something to do with the strategic withdrawal of the mission station to the Sak River in March 1800.

Another reason for the retreat was that relations with the San captain, Vigilant, had become extremely tense. Vigilant, who was regarded by Visser as being one of the principal captains by virtue of the influence which he exerted over the other San, had been a key figure in the peace negotiations. His kraal was in the vicinity of the Sak River and his continued support was crucial for the mission's well-being.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, whilst Kicherer was away visiting Cape Town, between January and March 1800, ("for the purpose of procuring the necessary supplies for my people, particularly Clothes"), Vigilant's conduct became rather menacing. It would seem that even before Kicherer's departure Vigilant's behaviour had taken a turn for the worse. He had killed his fellow captain, Orlam, with a knife thrust, and he began to incite the other San against the missionaries. Kicherer had asked Visser to detain Vigilant at his farm. This the *veldcoronet* had done but once Kicherer had left Visser permitted Vigilant to return to the mission station. Vigilant had then instructed one of the attendant Khoikhoi to bring him a sheep from the missionaries' kraal but Cornelis Kramer, who had been left in charge of Blydevooruitzicht,

51. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.11-13. Frans Maritz was Gerrit Maritz's brother. See De Villiers and Pama, Vol. 1, p.537; CA, 1/STB 10/151, Maritz - Landdrost, 20 Sept. 1797.

52. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Visser - Landdrost, 28 Sept. 1799; Visser - Landdrost, 4 Dec. 1799; Kicherer, "Narrative", p.12.

53. See chapter ten above.

54. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 7 April 1799.

opposed this too free interpretation of Christian charity. Not to be denied Vigiland stabbed the sheep and would have stabbed Kramer too had not a girl interposed her kaross between the adversaries. Vigiland was then "seized by Brother Kramer, who the Lord, on this occasion, endowed with unusual strength and intrepidity", and conveyed Vigiland to Floris Visser.⁵⁵

Unfortunately for the peace of the mission, Vigiland did not stay captive for long. Perhaps Visser was reluctant to antagonise Vigiland and thereby jeopardise the trust which he enjoyed amongst the San. Whatever his reasons were, however, Visser seemed unable or unwilling to keep Vigiland a prisoner and, by 20 March, he was back causing trouble around Blydevooruitzicht. Kicherer thereupon sent an urgent appeal to Visser's rival, Gerrit Maritz, who had recently been appointed as *veldcornet* of the Middle Roggeveld, asking him to send a commando to deal forcibly with Vigiland. Maritz acted as discretely as possible, not wishing to break the fragile truce in Bushmanland, and succeeded in capturing the San captain. But, as Vigiland was being taken to Stellenbosch under the escort of two colonists, he once again managed to escape.⁵⁶

According to Kicherer, Vigiland was "foaming with rage, and calling upon his numerous horde to assist him in revenging the affront". Maritz gave a more sober account of the cause of Vigiland's wrath:

toen ik hun vrag om wat oorsaaken hy sulks deet heeft hy my geantwoort wat af de sendelingen in syn lant maakt waarom dat sullij niet byde aandere duys volk blief dat hy het et kon verdragen dat de duys volk in syn lant woon.⁵⁷

We can only speculate what lay behind this succinct statement of Vigiland's grievances for further details are lacking. Kicherer's belief, that Vigiland was "very friendly to us, but is embittered against our great Sender",⁵⁸ seems a less than thorough analysis of the cause of Vigiland's antagonism. It would seem that the missionaries were perceived by the San captain as posing a fundamental threat to the way of life of his people and, like all colonists, they were to be kept out of his territory.

55. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Cornelis Kramer - Visser, 3 March 1800; Maritz - Landdrost, 19 March 1800; Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.15-16.

56. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Kicherer - Maritz, 20 March 1800; Maritz - Landdrost, 23 March 1800; Maritz - Landdrost, 30 March 1800.

57. "When I asked him why he did this he answered what are the missionaries doing in his country why don't they stay with the other Dutch people that he could not endure the Dutch living in his country." CA, 10/150, Maritz - Landdrost, 30 March 1800; Kicherer, "Narrative", p.16.

58. *Transactions*, p.340.

Fortunately for the missionaries they were saved from Vigiland's unbridled hostility by the timely arrival of reinforcements in the form of a certain colonist by the name of Jacobus Scholtz - another colonist who had felt moved to become a missionary - and a visiting farmer with his attendant servants. Further security was provided by those San who were unconvinced by Vigiland's expostulations and who decided to support the missionaries. The mission was, however, removed forthwith, southwards to the Sak River, whilst Kramer and Edwards, whether from prudence or the guidance of Providence, discovered callings at the Hex River and Cape Town respectively.⁵⁹

In April Maritz led a commando to the Sak River where Kicherer urged him to recapture Vigiland. Maritz would not, however, take the risk of antagonising the San. Vigiland had fled to the scattered kraals of Bushmanland and it was certain that there would be considerable resistance if an attempt was made to arrest him. The San of the mission station were emphatic that, should Vigiland be shot, his followers would be sure to take revenge on the missionaries. For the time being, therefore, Kicherer was obliged to leave Vigiland unpunished whilst, with Scholtz's help, he attempted to consolidate the mission at its new site on the Sak River.⁶⁰

The trouble with Vigiland had brought home to the missionaries the unpalatable fact that, ultimately, they were dependent on the government and its functionaries for their protection. One of the reasons Kicherer had visited Cape Town in the beginning of 1800 was that he wished to receive renewed government support for his endeavours. This was forthcoming in the form of a set of instructions, issued by the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch in February, for the *veldcornets* of the northern frontier. In effect these instructions were a reiteration of Macartney's proclamation of 24 July 1798 but they placed a new and heavy stress on the role of missionaries as administrators of the government's peace policies. They also took up Floris Visser's suggestions of April 1799, namely, that the colonists should not be allowed unconditional access to Bushmanland. If any

59. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.16. Kramer returned to missionary labour on the northern frontier when he accompanied the LMS missionary William Anderson beyond the Orange River to Rietfontein in 1801. Edwards went to join Van der Kemp at the eastern frontier (*Transactions*, 331) but was in Cape Town at the beginning of 1801 in order to lodge a serious complaint against Kicherer. He accused Kicherer of unchastity with the wife of J. de Preez and with the widow Olivier. According to De Jongh ("Sendingwerk", p.261) these allegations "het blykbaar berus op die onverantwoordelike uittaling van 'n besope man en 'n Hottentot vrou wat teen Kicherer bevooroordeeld was". The South African Missionary Society did not find Kicherer guilty and Edwards, accompanied by his wife, the Capetonian Miss M. Schonberg, left to minister to the Tswana. (De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.261-262; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.106-107). The LMS *Register of Missionaries* claims that his connection with the society ceased on 11 September 1800 but De Jongh gives the date, more reasonably, as November 1802. (De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", p.262).

60. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 18 April 1800.

colonists were found grazing their livestock over the Sak River the missionaries were to report them to the nearest *veldcornet*. Likewise, the missionaries were empowered to keep a watchful eye over the area which had been set aside for the San, making sure that no colonists did anything to interfere with their free and unhindered enjoyment of the resources. Game could only be hunted by colonists if they had a licence from the missionaries whilst the farmers were, once again, urged to make generous donations of livestock to the mission station so that the San would be provided with sustenance and weaned from their predatory roving by exposure to Christian instruction. The *veldcornets* were commanded to give all the necessary support to the missionaries who were, by the above instructions, made chief overseers of the San's welfare.⁶¹

This combination of measures was to cause considerable resentment amongst colonial frontiersmen and, in time, led to the large-scale evasion or abuse of the regulations.⁶² However necessary such steps might have been for the protection of the San, the virtual closure of Bushmanland, with its resources of game and grazing, placed severe constraints on the *trekboers* who had long been accustomed to making seasonal incursions into the region. Matters were not improved by the fact that the years around the turn of the century were years of drought, stock loss and, particularly in the Roggeveld, crop failure.⁶³ Another source of contention in the February instructions was that they seemed designed to undermine the authority of the *veldcornets* relative to the authority of the missionaries. That this, in fact, did not transpire was due to the fact that, no sooner had Kicherer gained these concessions, then the Vigilant affair took place. The missionaries' recourse to requesting the despatch of commandos was a rude reminder that, in their vulnerable position, they needed temporal protection. The strangely passive role that Visser played in dealing with the crisis has to be examined and is partially explicable in the context of his rivalry with Maritz.

In September 1799 the government had been obliged to make an administrative reform in the Roggeveld where the animosity between Floris Visser and Gerrit Maritz was threatening to interfere with the implementation of its policies. Realising that Maritz's support was essential the government had decided to divide the Middle Roggeveld into two, appointing Visser as *veldcornet*

61. CA, 1/STB 20/30, Landdrost - [?], 11 Feb 1800.

62. The worst offender in this, as in so many other things, was Jochem Scholtz. In February 1801 Maritz wrote to the authorities to complain that whilst Scholtz complained of others who had been eland hunting he was himself the most guilty. Maritz had been told by Scholtz's "volk" (who had been threatened with violence from their master if they betrayed him) that Scholtz had shot five eland, his son two, his slave one and his "Bastaard-Hottentot" another. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 6 Feb. 1801; Scholtz - Maritz, 31 Jan. 1801.

63. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 9 Sept 1800; Maritz - Landdrost, 6 May 1801; Visser - Landdrost, 20 Jan. 1801.

of the "agterste omtrek van het middelste Roggeveld" and Maritz as *veldcornet* of the "voorste omtrek".⁶⁴ Visser, not surprisingly, took umbrage, and requested to be released from his post as "peace maker to the bossimans" since, he argued, he would be shamed by such a diminishment of his powers and lose his authority over the San. The missionaries, he claimed, supported him in this, for by reducing his power the peace itself was threatened. The proposed division of the Roggeveld, Visser argued, favoured Maritz excessively, particularly since the latter individual was telling all the inhabitants that they were at liberty to remove themselves from his, Visser's, jurisdiction and place themselves under his own. If the division followed the lines drawn by Maritz, Visser concluded, he would have far too few men and would lose everything.⁶⁵

From Maritz's vantage point it seemed as if Visser was using his title of "peace maker" to claim the right to command throughout the Roggeveld. Maritz took pains to portray Visser as someone who thought that the government had no right to act without his consent; who caused division in the district; who threatened those who were in favour of the division of power; and who had the arrogance to sneer at Maritz because he did not have a farm of his own.⁶⁶

It is not known how the ruffled feelings of both men were soothed but the administration could not afford to have its *veldcornets* resigning just then. The San of the Groote Kraal seemed poised to attack at any moment, whilst the activities of the Afrikaner gang were necessitating the mobilisation of commandos throughout the northern frontier zone.⁶⁷ Perhaps Visser was mollified by Maritz's offer to place the men of the "voorste omtrek" under the command of the *veldcornet* of the "agterste omtrek" should the occasion arise. If this was the case, however, the concession proved to be a hollow one for, the first time that Visser asked Maritz for men, he was denied.⁶⁸

Though Visser did not resign at this stage he does seem to have neglected his responsibilities as *veldcornet*, partly to make things more difficult for Maritz and partly because his reputation as "peace maker" to the San enabled him to enjoy many of the fruits of power without having to

64. The "outer district of the Middle Roggeveld" and the "inner district".

65. CA, 1/STB 10/152, Visser - Landdrost, 20 Sept. 1797. The undated list drawn up by Gerrit Maritz is in CA, 1/STB 10/151, after Maritz's letter of 20 Sept. 1797.

66. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Maritz - Landdrost, 20 Sept. 1799. Maritz lived on one of the farms of his brother, Frans Maritz. Frans loaned "de Ezelsjacht" and "de Vytfontein" in the Roggeveld (RLR 36, 28 Dec. 1790, pp.262-263). The farms were three-quarters of an hour from each other and Frans lived on the one not occupied by his brother. Gerrit explained that Frans had freely granted him the farm, so long as they both lived and so long as he paid the recognition money. Both farms retain the same names today and are about ten kilometres west of Sutherland.

67. See chapter ten above.

68. CA, 1/STB 10/151, Maritz - Landdrost, 26 Nov. 1799.

shoulder any of the commensurate onerous duties. Indeed, the *landdrost's* instructions of February 1800 benefited no one as much as Floris Visser for he was able to use his reputation, with both the missionaries and the San, to turn Bushmanland into what was virtually his own private game reserve. Not only was Visser the *veldcornet* closest to the mission (both geographically and spiritually), but he was also the colonist with the greatest influence over the San. Even his enemies were obliged to admit that Visser:

zedert het jaar 1798 veel invloed by de bosjesmans Hottentotten heeft gehad, en door dien Zyn zoon Gerrit derselven taal volkomen magtig is, hy een meedervertrowe by die volke heeft verkreege.⁶⁹

Contributing towards the creation of this influence were the fact that he maintained a large group of San on his farm; the fact that he played the leading role in rounding up donations of livestock for the San; and the fact that he became the principal supplier of game to the San. It was the last of these activities that increasingly caused resentment amongst his fellow Roggevelders for, whilst they were barred from hunting beyond the Sak River, Visser and his followers (and this was an important source of patronage in his hands) could roam where they pleased.⁷⁰

It may, therefore, be appreciated that Visser had very little to gain by arresting Vigilant and stirring up a hornet's nest in Bushmanland. His inactivity in this matter was also a protest, both against the government's attempt to limit his domain and against Maritz. The latter individual had learnt, through his fruitless commando to catch Vigilant in April 1800, that he could not achieve anything in Bushmanland without Visser. The missionaries and the colonists were also grudgingly forced to concede that Visser's influence was an essential factor in keeping the San pacific.⁷¹ Slightly more disillusioned than before, Kicherer concentrated on picking up the threads of his mission at its new location on the Sak River and, with Scholtz's help, the work began anew.

69. "Since the year 1798 [he] has had great influence over the Bushmen-Hottentots, and since his son Gerrit is perfectly fluent in their language he has become greatly trusted by them." CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.-7 Jan. 1805.

70. A number of these grievances came to light in the petition which some of the inhabitants of the Middle Roggeveld sent to the Commisaris for Tulbagh, H.L. Bletterman, on 22 Sept 1804. The contents of this petition are to be found in CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.-7 Jan. 1805. Evidence that Visser was neglecting his duties is to be found in all of Maritz's letters and, more convincingly, in Visser's letter of 20 Jan. 1801 when he asks the *landdrost* not be angry with him for not being present at the appointed time in order to submit his *opgaaf*. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Visser - Landdrost, 20 Jan. 1801.

71. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.-7 Jan. 1805.

Vigiland's hostility had been a sad indication that the honeymoon period between the missionaries and their "savages" was over. True, not all of the San had deserted Kicherer, but it was apparent that the readiest, sincerest Christian converts were not to be found amongst the San but amongst the Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots". Revealingly, Kicherer hinted that the San had, initially, regarded him as "beggarly fellow, who had come among them merely to obtain a livelihood".⁷² This unfavourable impression had, Kicherer trusted, been overcome by a combination of exposure to the truth and by the impact of a visit to Cape Town, undertaken by nine San who accompanied Kicherer thither in January 1800.⁷³ Despite this, from April onwards, the mission became more and more directed towards people other than the San. Ultimately, it was this gradual change of focus which spelt the end of the Bushmanland mission for, if it was not ministering to the San, what was the point of situating it in their territory?

The unreceptivity of the San to Christianity needs some elaboration. Elbourne has suggested that Khoikhoi acceptance of Christianity was partly due to the fact that certain religious concepts were held in common; the belief, for instance, in a supreme being or God, and the belief in an evil trickster or devil figure. The Khoikhoi, she argues, were able to add Christian beliefs to their own without necessarily abandoning existing beliefs.⁷⁴ Other studies of the reception of Christianity amongst African societies have also stressed the highly syncretic forms of belief amongst African converts and drawn attention to the creative transformation which Christianity undergoes when it is adopted as an African religion.⁷⁵ Given the many similarities which existed between Khoikhoi and San religious beliefs might one not have expected the San to have embraced Christianity as fervently as the Khoikhoi?⁷⁶

72. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.14. "Mr Kicherer, when in London, mentioned to a friend that such were the suspicions the Boschemen entertained of the Missionaries at first (wicked men having told them that they would be ensnared and killed) that they would not venture to eat with him." "Narrative", p.13, note.

73. The San were introduced (or exhibited) to the governor and other dignitaries to whom they made a speech in which they, allegedly, thanked the governor "for permitting Missionaries to come and teach them, no man before having cared for their souls". Kicherer notes how they compared the "genteel auditory" at the Calvinist Church to a nest of ants; and the sound of the organ to the noise of a swarming bee-hive. But surely their abiding impression must have been of "Some of the first objects which presented themselves to their affrighted view", namely, "several men hung in chains for atrocious crimes, and many of the Boschemen were conscious of having deserved the same punishment. Their terror was soon increased by beholding in a few days the public execution of another malefactor." Kicherer went on to explain to them "the nature and excellence of European Justice, as an ordinance of God" but his conclusion smacks of self-delusion. "This pacified them: they allowed the propriety of it, and said it would be happy for our settlement in the wilderness, if a similar order of things could be established there." "Narrative", pp.14-15.

74. Elbourne, "To Colonize The Mind", pp.122-132.

75. Robin Horton, "African Conversion", *Africa*, 41 (2), 1971, pp.85-108. See also J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*.

76. For these similarities see A. Barnard, *Hunters and Herders*, p.252.

As it happens, the San have always proved to be resistant to Christian conversion and this is only partly due to the political context of missionisation. Alan Barnard has noted that "Only a very small fraction of Bushmen have in any sense been converted to Christianity, and I doubt whether many of these, except at one or two permanent mission settlements in north-eastern Namibia, have displayed even the pretence of giving up their traditional beliefs".⁷⁷ The problem is certainly not one of receptivity but, if anything, an over-receptivity to myths and stories. As Barnard explains:

It is characteristic of Bushman mythology, and of Bushman culture generally, that ideas can pass from one group to another, from one system to another, without any indigenous acknowledgement of the potential for transformation of such a system. Ideas and stories are easily assimilated without threat to the belief system as a whole.⁷⁸

A possible explanation for this is that such flexibility and fluidity is to be expected in hunter-gatherer societies where group structures and social relationships are equally fluid and flexible. For the San, religion is an integral part of the specific ecosystem in which they operate, and the natural, the social and the spiritual are all closely intertwined.⁷⁹ "Like the fluidity in patterns of settlement and seasonal migration, fluidity in belief supplements such frameworks and allows them to persist."⁸⁰ There is also, however, a fundamental inflexibility at the heart of this easy acceptance of other people's stories. No belief is allowed to interfere with the traditional flexibility which is so necessary if hunter-gatherers are to continue to exist as hunters and gatherers. Thus, those aspects of the Christian message which encouraged a sedentary life; or a life devoted to the production or exchange of commodities; or a life of service as a bondsman in someone else's employment; or even the adoption of a pastoralist life-style, were rejected as inappropriate.

Amongst the Khoikhoi, on the other hand, both political structures and religious beliefs were less flexible. More accurately, perhaps, they were flexible enough to be altered but not, like a reed in the wind, flexible enough to bend whilst retaining their form. The incorporation of the Khoikhoi into colonial structures was far more profound than that which was experienced by the San who were, as we have seen, not so much included within as excluded by colonial society. The wind

77. Ibid., pp.261-2.

78. Ibid., p.261.

79. Ibid., pp.261-2. See also A. Barnard, "Structure and fluidity in Khoisan religious ideas", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 18, 1988, pp.216-236. See also Mathias Guenther, "Bushman religion and the (non)sense of anthropological theory of religion", *Sociologus*, 29, 1979, pp.102-32.

80. Barnard, *Hunters and Herders*, p.262.

would eventually blow the San away completely, but they died unconverted. The Khoikhoi, for their part, adopted the Christian message along with the social, economic and political processes of transformation which they were undergoing. In this they were no doubt encouraged by some comforting similarities. There was, after all, a great deal of common ground between the ideas of pastoral theology and pastoral production. The Israelites had been nomadic pastoralists and Christ was the Good Shepherd. But there were other reasons why the non-European pastoralists of the colony were ready, in ways the San were not, for conversion to Christianity.

The slight southward shift of the mission towards the colony's border facilitated the access of groups of Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Baastard-Hottentots" to Christian instruction.⁸¹ Decades of exposure to colonial culture meant that they could understand Dutch and were not unfamiliar with the values of colonial society. They could perceive the close correlation which existed between church membership and the rights of citizenship, where Christianity seemed to be the necessary, if not the sufficient, precondition to status enhancement.⁸² Quite apart from the spiritual consolations which Christianity offered the rootless, broken and marginal peoples of the frontier zone were these social compensations. But the key to entry into the Christian community was education and its hallmark, literacy. That there was a great hunger for literacy may be gauged from the request of a group of "Groot Riviers bastaards en hottentots" who visited Floris Visser in February 1800. Visser had erected a school house on his farm⁸³ and the visitors, aware of developments in the south, asked him whether he could send them a missionary or a school master. Visser was able to provide them with reading primers since one of their number, Dauwijs Mijner, was already literate. There were, Visser wrote, several "Bastaards" who knew their A.B.C. and he provided them with what books he could.⁸⁴

This information was, doubtless, transmitted to Kicherer on his return from Cape Town in March 1800.⁸⁵ Further reminders of the vast numbers of potential converts amongst the communities of the Orange River - seemingly so much more appreciative than the San - came in the form of a Korana woman called Trey and a man by the name of Goeiman. Both of these people, natives of the Great River, became model converts. Even more enticing were the repeated visits of several

81. Kicherer, ("Narrative", pp.16-19) remarked that a number of "tame Hottentots" joined the mission at this time and that dramatic conversions took place among "Bastaards".

82. M. Leggassick, "The Northern Frontier", p.337.

83. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, Aug. 1801.

84. CA, 1/STB 10/150, Visser - Landdrost, 11 March 1800.

85. Literacy was also an important cultural marker for the LMS missionaries. Elbourne speaks of the "metonymic identification between literacy and freedom" which was transported to South Africa with the LMS missionaries. Elbourne, "To Colonize The Mind", p.75.

Kora, requesting Kicherer to "preach the word of life among them".⁸⁶ An attempt by a group of San to shoot Kicherer with arrows was, perhaps, a further incentive to move to a new field of endeavour.⁸⁷

Thus it was that, in May 1801, Kicherer, his assistants Anderson⁸⁸ (who had joined him early in February 1801), Kramer (returned from the Hex River) and Scholtz, together with their faithful flock, decided to journey to the river. Before this new missionary terrain was opened, however, Kicherer had a brush with a man who was to exert a powerful influence on the societies of the Orange River and who, in a perverse way, acted as a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for Christian ministry along and beyond the banks of the Orange.

86. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.20-23; *Transactions*, p.341. On reading an earlier draft of this chapter Karel Schoeman made the following comments: "Goeiman's name was Petrus; the spelling 'Goeyman' seems to have been that generally used at the time. The fact that the family of Cornelius Goeyman was prominent at Sak River and remained so in the annals of the LMS for a quarter of a century (Jan Goeyman established Philippolis and worked there 1822-5), leads me to believe that the station at Sak River was caught up in the network of connections and communications existing between the Basters of the Cedarberg, Kamiesberg and Orange River, and that this actually gave the impetus for the move to the latter location: that the initiative should have come from the Korana, as stated by Kicherer, rather than the Basters, who were well aware of the advantage of connections with the Colony and its white establishment, has always seemed rather unconvincing to me."

87. "In the evening of a day which was uncommonly sultry, I was sitting near an open window, when a concealed party of Boschemen were just about to discharge a volley of poisoned arrows at me; but, by the same girl who saved the life of Brother Kramer from the dagger of Vigilant, they were detected and made off in haste." Kicherer, "Narrative" p.21. One of Kicherer's converts, Karolus, a "Bastaard-Hottentot" who acted as an interpreter to the San, wrote in a letter to the LMS that: "He (Kicherer) is afraid of nothing. Here are wicked Boschemen, they say our teacher is a Devil to them, because of the things he will learn them, therefore they will shoot him with the arrow. Some Hottentots told us, that they who are present in the mountains, will come at a time that my good teacher gives us instruction, that they will plunder the house and steal the sheep. I was afraid they should come, but my good teacher slept without a door, there being no wood to make one. He tells me not to be afraid, for that the Lord Jesus will preserve us." *Transactions*, p.343. It should, perhaps, be mentioned that the missionaries were not without guns. *Transactions*, p.340.

88. In September 1800 a second group of LMS missionaries arrived at the Cape. These included William Anderson, James Read, Bastiaan Tromp and Aart van der Lingen. *LMS Register*, p.4; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.105-106.

The Failure of the Sak River Mission, 1801-1806

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MISSIONARY PRESENCE AT THE ORANGE RIVER

Shortly before the departure of the missionaries for the Orange, the Sak River station was visited by a certain Stephanos, a Greek by birth who, unbeknown to Kicherer, was under sentence of death in Cape Town for making counterfeit coins.¹ Kicherer was, temporarily, without the company of Kramer and Scholtz, for these two men were busy trekking the wilds of Bushmanland, dispensing gifts of tobacco in the hope of attracting more San to the mission.² According to Kicherer, Stephanos had an extremely religious demeanour and expressed himself willing to assist in the building of a chapel so, despite some suspicions, Kicherer allowed him to stay the night. The missionary went to bed but awoke later in a fit of terror, crying out in fright to see Stephanos standing by his bed preparatory (he was convinced) to murdering him. Kicherer's fears may well have been justified for though Stephanos was dissuaded from his murderous intention he did steal Kicherer's gun and depart with some of the more impressionable San neophytes who were, he assured them, in imminent danger of vengeful attack by the colonists. Next morning Kicherer's faithful Khoikhoi pursued the fugitives and, no doubt by virtue of their superior strength, persuaded Stephanos to surrender both the gun and his San followers. Stephanos was allowed to escape but, unfortunately for Kicherer's peace of mind, crossed paths with Kramer and Scholtz who were returning from their mission to Bushmanland. The two colonial brethren were in no doubt as to Stephanos's identity and arrested him, compelling the forger to return with them to Sak River. Kicherer was far from pleased to see Stephanos again and felt torn between his duties as a loyal subject of the government and his Christian charity. Eventually he decided to enable Stephanos to escape again, pointing him in a northerly direction and equipping him with advice, some provisions and a Bible. It was the last of these items that was to prove most valuable to Stephanos, but in a way undreamed of by the missionaries.³

On 25 March 1801 Anderson set off for the Orange River. He had left Cape Town on 10 February, in Kicherer's company, and was now to press on beyond the Sak River as the vanguard

1. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.22-23; "Reizen", pp.242-244; W.J. Burchell, *Travels In The Interior of Southern Africa* (London, 1822-1824), 2 Vols., reprinted 1953, p.252; E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.97-98; J. Campbell, *Travels In South Africa* (London, 1815), reprinted 1974, pp.377-378. Burchell refers to Stephanos as "a native of Courland", p.252.

2. Kicherer, "Reizen", p.242.

3. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.22-23; "Reizen", p.242-244.

of the missionaries. With him went a part of the luggage and an escort of "Bastaards". Kicherer, Kramer and Scholtz were to follow later. Anderson reached the river on 5 April without incident although the San had followed the progress of his party closely. Gifts of sheep and game served to keep these people friendly and, having crossed over the river, Anderson awaited the arrival of his friends. On July 6 they duly arrived and the missionaries began to establish themselves at a place called Rietfontein, about three day's journey north of the river.⁴

During the course of the trek to the river Kicherer had found the country to be far more populous than he had supposed and, amongst the societies of the Orange, the missionaries found "a great hunger for the bread of life". Initially it was thought that the Korana and "Bastaard-Hottentots" would be the people to whom the mission would be directed but it soon became apparent that recent events had prepared a far wider and far more receptive audience than could have been imagined. The depredations of the Afrikaner gang⁵ had caused crowds of Korana, Namaqua, Einiqua, "Bastaard-Hottentots", "Bastaards" and San to seek collective security and Rietfontein seemed to offer itself as an ideal nucleus around which to gather. Numerous flocks and herds accompanied these people although not all of them had any livestock. Kicherer noted that the Korana and Namaqua had been particularly hard hit by robbery, a condition which obliged them to work as virtual slaves for the more prosperous "Bastaards".⁶

In these circumstances the reception of the gospel message was truly dramatic. The radical disruption which many of the people at Rietfontein had recently suffered was not only accompanied by material loss and physical insecurity. The social fabric of entire societies had been torn apart, resulting in attendant cultural and psychic trauma for individual members. Such terrain was fertile ground for Christianity, especially when its spiritual securities were coupled with prospects of a more stable political order.⁷ Even Kicherer was somewhat surprised and embarrassed by the enthusiasm of his disciples:

4. Anderson, Letters to LMS, 24 March 1801, 6 Dec. 1801, in *Transactions*, pp.344-348; Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.23-26. The Kora name for Rietfontein was "Aakaap" which means "Reed fountain". E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.165. Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica A**, pp.153-154.

5. Somerville noted, when he visited Rietfontein in November 1801: "The bastards formerly resided lower down the river on the other side near Namaqualand, which they have been forced to abandon on account of the depredations committed by a Hottentot of the name of Africaner who has put himself at the head of a horde of Bosjesmen, who rob everyone within their reach. A few of the Bastards here have lost above 700 cattle by him." E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.97.

6. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.23, 27; "Reizen", p.252.

7. A recent study of the impact of missionaries on the societies of southern Namibia in the early nineteenth century has recorded a similar fervent response to the Christian gospel. See T. Dederling, "Southern Namibia c.1780-c.1840: Khoikhoi, Missionaries And The Advancing Frontier", pp.173-182.

What I am about to relate will probably appear to some readers perfectly ridiculous, but it is a fact that we were always obliged to have a bottle of vinegar on the table, for the relief of those who actually fainted under alarms of conscience and powerful convictions. Certain it is that the tears which were shed at the period among these poor people cannot be numbered, and though we could not say that these strong impressions always issued in sound conversion, yet we have reason to believe they did so in many happy instances.⁸

The material base from which this spiritual exuberance would have to be sustained was not as promising as the missionaries believed. Rietfontein was situated on a dry and sandy plain where cultivation was dependent on irrigation. The vast numbers of people (about 400) and livestock (about 5 or 6 000 head of cattle, sheep and goats) gathered about the place by November 1801 meant that the surroundings rapidly became overgrazed and unable to support so many. Furthermore, the missionaries, ever quick to establish a vegetable garden,⁹ were left to attend to its cultivation themselves, since none of their charges showed the least inclination to join them in their labours under the scorching sun. In these circumstances it was eventually proposed that the missionaries should, perhaps, follow their pastoralist acolytes and their animals from place to place in search of grazing. But, in the meantime, reed buildings were built so as to provide habitations for the teachers and places of worship and instruction for the knowledge-hungry herdsmen prior to their inevitable dispersal.¹⁰

Hard on the heels of these pioneer missionaries came both other men of God and government commissioners. The first arrival was a man called Jan Matthys Kok. Lichtenstein, in some unpublished notes, described him as "de zoon van een Europeaan en een Hottentotsmeid, doch

8. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.28. Anderson endorsed Kicherer's statement: "Respecting the work of the Lord here, at times it appears peculiarly encouraging, as if the Lord by his spirit was powerfully shaking among the dry bones, yes, to such a degree that I doubt if in latter time there is one example of the like. While the precious word is making known, numbers hear with tears in their eyes, others are so distressed, that after sitting for some time apparently in great agony, they faint away, and are carried out as dead, and so distressing is the place at times, that it is impossible to proceed in the divine service." Anderson, Letter to LMS, 6 Dec. 1801, *Transactions*, p.347. Robert Ross has noted the uneasy attitude of John Philip when confronted with the strong emotions of recent Khoikhoi converts during Christian worship. "When [observers] make their caustic and sneering remarks upon the exclamations and groans of an uncivilised congregation, they forget that there is scarcely any medium in such circumstances between not feeling at all, and giving full vent to the expression of their feelings. Human beings emerging from a savage state are like children much agitated; they can neither suppress nor control their passions under any extraordinary excitement." Quoted by Ross in, "The Etiquette of Race", in R. Ross, *Beyond The Pale*, pp.114-7.

9. One of the crops that the missionaries wished to grow was that indispensable evangelical aid; tobacco. Anderson, Letter to LMS, 24 March 1801, in *Transactions*, p.345.

10. Anderson, Letter to LMS, 6 Dec. 1801; *Transactions*, p.345-348; Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.26-29; E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.97-100.

door zyn vader geligitemeerd en wel opgevoed".¹¹ Burchell, who had himself never met Kok, and who wrote of him nearly three years after his death, referred to him as a "Half-Hottentot".¹² Other commentators do nothing to suggest that he was of mixed ancestry.¹³ Kok had been inspired by the preaching of M.C. Vos and had evangelised energetically in the Olifants River and Cedarberg districts around the years 1799 and 1800.¹⁴ He was a member of the South Africa Missionary Society and had asked for permission to join the LMS mission to the San. This permission was, at first, refused by the fiscal, on the grounds that no one was to proceed beyond the boundaries of the colony. According to Lichtenstein, Jan Kok was keen to leave the colony because of the prejudice and poverty from which he suffered, but his Christian conviction was nonetheless sincere.¹⁵ Eventually Kok was allowed to precede Edwards to the north where the two men resolved to preach and live amongst the Tswana.¹⁶ In this enterprise Edwards was assisted by the almost simultaneous departure of a government expedition to the Tswana, led by Somerville and Truter, whose purpose was to try to barter cattle from the virtually unknown societies beyond the Orange.¹⁷ Kok had already established himself four hours' journey from Rietfontein by the time the government expedition reached him in November 1801. Here, at a place called the T'kaaraap pass, Kok instructed a group of about one hundred Korana and Einiqua whilst tending his substantial flocks and herds.¹⁸ Both Kok and Edwards would later attract criticism for trading in ivory but, as Lichtenstein explained, such trade was essential if they were to survive in their isolated mission.¹⁹

11. "The son of a European and a Hottentot woman, though legitimated and well educated by his father". I am grateful to Karel Schoeman for sending me a copy of Lichtenstein's notes "Over de Zendelingen onder de heidenen benoorden de groote Rivier" from the J.W. Janssens Collection in the Alg. Rijksarchief. In Lichtenstein's *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.295 he refers to him as "African born", which simply means "born in the Cape".

12. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.298.

13. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.295. See also De Villiers and Pama, *Geslagsregisters*, Vol. 1, p.408, where Jan Matthys, baptised 1763, is registered as the son of Jan Matthys from Brandenburg and Elisabeth Maria Sas. J.T. du Bruyn gives a reliable account of Jan Kok's background in "Die Aanvangsjare van die Christelike Sending onder die Tlhaping, 1800-1825", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1989, 11, p.24.

14. De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.10, 231-232; Du Bruyn, "Sending onder die Tlhaping", p.24.

15. Lichtenstein, Janssens Collection.

16. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.95, n., 96, 106-107; Du Bruyn, "Sending onder die Tlhaping", pp.24-44.

17. E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*; "Journal of P.J. Truter and W. Somerville", in G.M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony*, May 1801-February 1803, Vol. IV (Cape Town, 1899), pp.359-436; P.B. Borchers, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (Cape Town, 1861).

18. E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.97.

19. Lichtenstein, Janssens Collection. Du Bruyn has the best discussion of the missionary (and other) labours of Edwards and Kok in "Sending onder die Tlhaping", pp.24-44. See pp.482-3 below for further details of missionary involvement in the ivory trade.

After the government expedition pressed on, taking Edwards (later to be joined by Kok) with them, Kicherer was obliged to deal with an alarming threat to the propagation of the true gospel along the banks of the Orange. Stephanos the Forger had managed to walk from the Sak to the Orange River - no small achievement for an unarmed man in a hostile environment²⁰ - and, equipped only with a Bible, gained a remarkable influence over the gospel-starved Oorlams of the regions. Stephanos, as Kicherer related:

after leaving our Settlement at Zak River, had gone to a horde of Bastard-Hottentots, commonly called Cornelius Kok's Kraal, had there set up for a missionary and a Prophet, establishing his authority on the basis of superstition so firmly, that his will had become the law of every individual in the horde, and the most atrocious crimes were committed by him with impunity. Whoever ventured to murmur against his abominable acts of rapine or lust, was sure to be put into the stocks, or to be beaten unmercifully. Stephanos had erected a temple, resting on pillars, with an Altar within, on which sacrifices were offered. He had a number of select disciples, who, like himself, feigned trances, in which they lay for many hours, and out of which they pretended to awake with messages which they had brought from the angel Gabriel, or from God himself. Did the impostor wish to gratify his lust, his covetousness, or his revenge? an answer from heaven authorised him to effect his purpose. Should any dissatisfaction or luke-warmness appear among his followers? immediately the judgements of God, yea, the conflagration of the whole world were immediately threatened. Cornelius Kok himself, the Chief, who possessed a vast property, was completely devoted to the will of this wretch. He would preach against us also, and we were apprehensive that his doctrine, like that of Mahomet, might widely diffuse its baneful influences among the neighbouring heathen.²¹

Stephanos had obviously been able to capitalise on the expectation of the Orange River Oorlams that missionaries were about to come amongst them. Cornelius Kok was not entirely ignorant of the principle of Christianity for he had previously hired Andries Craaij, the illegal and incompetent *veldwagtmeester* of Klein Namaqualand,²² to teach him the catechism and to read and write.²³ But nor was Stephanos an uneducated man and, with the Bible which had been given at Sak River, he gained an ascendancy over the minds of the kraal such as, the missionaries have confessed, "they have never been able to gain".²⁴ Since his religion was composed of elements of "the Jewish, Mahomedan and Roman Catholic",²⁵ and since it was presented in his

20. A point made by Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.252.

21. Kicherer, *Narrative*, p.30.

22. For Cornelius Kok and Andries Craaij see chapter ten.

23. De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", p.12.

24. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.252.

25. E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.98.

church, "built in a superior style ... with much imposing formality and ceremony",²⁶ it proved to be particularly hard for the inhabitants of Kok's Kraal to resist it, even though its principal purpose seemed to be the gratification of Stephanos' "villainy and debauchery the recital of which would even be disgraceful".²⁷

There was also, if we are to believe Somerville, a more political content to some of his preaching for he:

had taken pains to explain to the natives that they ought to drive the Christians from a colony that did not belong to them but to the Hottentots, and that God Almighty had sent him to indicate their rights and to instruct them in Religion - the making of gunpowder etc.²⁸

Such sentiments were probably less attractive to the Koks than they were to the Afrikaners but it must have taken considerable courage for Kicherer, escorted though he was, by "all our armed men", to confront Stephanos at Kok's Kraal - which is what he proceeded to do. The two missionaries, the true and the false, debated for four hours, Bibles in hand, under a tree in the wilderness.

Their followers meanwhile listened to a theological dispute which was, in all likelihood, quite beyond their comprehension. Kicherer was supremely confident that his arguments were superior but:

Stephanos and his deluded followers were unconvinced; and becoming more and more enraged, they seemed disposed to do me violence. ... The Impostor himself conveyed to my mind a striking idea of the Chief of Hell. His eyes rolled and flashed; his tongue moved with incessant volubility, and he strove to vindicate all his atrocities by examples derived from the Scriptures.²⁹

Seeing how unlikely it would be to overcome Stephanos by persuasive reasoning alone Kicherer ordered his followers to seize "the Impostor" on the grounds that he was a criminal wanted at the Cape. This action was effected and the crest-fallen Stephanos pleaded to be set at liberty, promising, in exchange, to leave the country. Kicherer required him to make a full confession of the error of his ways in the presence of his disillusioned supporters and Stephanos, "in a crying tone of voice", acknowledged that Kicherer was a teacher of the truth.

26. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.253.

27. E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.98.

28. Ibid.

29. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.31.

Magnanimous in victory and bolstered by the immediate adherence of the Koks, Kicherer once more enabled him to escape, encouraging him to head downstream to Namaqualand. The consequences were, once more, to be disastrous. As Stephanos made his way to the coast he encountered a burgher by the name of Engelbrecht who recognised him and attempted to arrest him. Stephanos promptly cut the man's throat with a razor, which he had concealed in his ever handy Bible, and continued on his way.³⁰ Before too long he fell in with the Afrikaner gang and was doubtless able to convince them, just as he had convinced the Koks, that he was a messenger from God. It was probably due to Stephanos's teachings that Afrikaner felt aggrieved enough to cry out, when attacked by the Truter-Somerville expedition in February 1802, that he was instructed and had repented.³¹ Further proof that Stephanos had been with the Afrikaners was furnished by the discovery of a very good jacket, found at the gang's hastily abandoned camp site after the attack of 14 February, and which Adam Kok II recalled as having been given to Stephanos when he first visited the Koks.³²

The subsequent career of Stephanos is obscure but Burchell tells us that he was finally murdered by some of the Great Namaqua.³³ Despite the imperfections of his conduct and the perversity of his teachings Stephanos undoubtedly played a major role in preparing Jager Afrikaner for Christianity. In the following year, 1803, came the first of Jager Afrikaner's requests for a missionary³⁴ and in 1805, as the first LMS missionaries made their way to establish mission stations in southern Namibia, they reported the following interesting encounter:

We this day met with people called Africans, who were formerly at the heads of such who formerly did great mischief along the Great River by killing and plundering people's property. One of them had killed a white man on the West Coast of Africa, near the mouth of the great River, therefore was taken by order of the said African (who had made peace with government and the Christians) and brought before the officer to be examined concerning his crime. The said African and his followers not only made peace with the officer Van der Westhuysen (*veldwagmeester* of Little Namaqualand) and faithfully promised not to hurt anyone in future, but were, as we heard, desirous to be taught the way to salvation which we heard from the people we met. This African formerly hid from an island in the great River, but at present lives in great Namaqualand.³⁵

30. Ibid., p.32.

31. See previous chapter for details of this incident.

32. Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, p.408.

33. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.253.

34. De Bruyn, "The Oorlams Africaners", p.11.

35. Quoted by T. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.104.

It may be seen from the above how widespread and intense the yearning for Christian instruction was amongst the Oorlam societies of the Orange River. The further development and significance of missionary activity in the area - as well as the later history of the various frontier societies - shall be dealt with in the concluding chapter. But by the time that Kicherer departed from the Orange in March 1802 it was apparent that the missionary presence in the region had inaugurated a new era for the neighbouring societies.

Anderson and Kramer remained to minister to the growing Christian community but Kicherer, for a variety of reasons, thought it best that he and Scholtz return to the Sak River. In the first place, after about ten months at the Orange, it became obvious that the produce of the land was insufficient for the support of the numerous flocks and herds of the missionaries' adherents.³⁶ It was essential that the missionaries separated and, in fact, even the reduced settlement was obliged to move from Rietfontein to T'kaaraap pass, to Zand Kraal and, finally, to Klaarwater.³⁷ A further reason encouraging Kicherer to leave was the longing of many of his followers to return to their familiar haunts near the Sak River,³⁸ particularly since they were being harassed by a "Boschmen free-booter of great fame, whose name is Courakakoup".³⁹ It was also, of course, necessary to renew the Sak River mission to the San since its abandonment would have impressed neither the government nor the LMS. Thus it was that in March 1802 Kicherer and Scholtz, together with their people, began their southwards trek.

36. Kicherer, *Narrative*, p.31. Somerville was singularly unimpressed by what he saw at Rietfontein and commented as follows: "I cannot help observing in this place that altho' the zeal and sincerity [sic] of the missionaries is not to be called in question, the prospect of fulfilling their objective is remote and doubtful, and at present is not without bad consequences. So great a multitude are collected together that there is scarcely a spot in this part of Africa capable of maintaining them and their flock ... the water is not super abundant, and however fertile the grass may be it is now so overstocked that every bit of grass is consumed. The milk which is almost the sole diet of the children becomes daily more scarce, the want of pasture has reduced the cattle of every sort to a miserable condition, even our draft oxen lost flesh during the few days we halted, instead of gaining from the rest they had." E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.99-100.

37. Burchell, *Travels*, Vol. 1, p.231. "Zand Kraal" was at the Orange River and its Khoikhoi name was Conaa Hiep 't Hijp", Kicherer, "Reizen", p.261.

38. Kicherer, "Reizen", p.263. Mention should be made of the San captain, Ruiter Zakriver, who had attached himself to the missionary Edwards at Blyde Vooruitzicht and who accompanied him to the Tswana. Ruiter, anxious to return to his place of abode, left Edwards on 23 December 1801 and joined the Truter-Somerville party. Ruiter Zakriver, possibly the same Ruiter who had made peace with Visser in 1799, was granted permission to settle, with his people, at the abandoned farm of Hendrik Korf, "Middelplaats", in Bushmanland. Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, pp.391 and 424.

39. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.33. The Truter-Somerville expedition was approached by the San captain "Caricacoup" on 7 November 1801 at Modderfontein, just before the T'Kaaraap pass. He gave them some salt and they gave him some trinkets and tobacco. See pp.458-59 below for the probable fate of Caricacoup.

THE SECOND PHASE OF THE SAK RIVER MISSION

It cannot be said that the /Xam of Bushmanland were pleased at the prospect of the missionaries' return. Indeed, some of the Sak River /Xam who, according to Kicherer, had expressed "a great desire for our return", mischievously gave them false information that considerable rain had fallen in the wilderness. After three days without water this was discovered to be a lie and the large flocks and herds of the Christians were in distress. Nor was this all for, when the first spring was reached, it was found to have been poisoned with serpents' heads. After recourse to prayer the missionaries were rewarded with "showers of blessing" but, no sooner had their stock recovered than eighty of their oxen were stolen. Although Kicherer's Khoikhoi succeeded in recovering seventy-three of the stolen cattle from the San robbers it was more than apparent that there was scant welcome for the missionaries in Bushmanland.⁴⁰

The sojourn of the missionaries at the Orange River had, inevitably, disturbed the pattern of peaceful co-existence which their presence at the Sak River had been supposed to promote. Without their mission to act as a distribution centre for gifts of livestock and tobacco⁴¹ within the Roggeveld/Bushmanland region the San had returned to their old ways with a vengeance. The severe drought of 1800, 1801 and 1802 created circumstances whereby the resumption of a nomadic lifestyle became imperative.⁴² Even the San at Visser's farm had abandoned him in August 1801 and trekked off over the Roggeveld. Before they did so, however, they broke into the school house which he had built and also into the grain shed of a neighbouring farmer. Visser was incensed enough to ask Maritz to send out a commando - an indication that at some point between September 1799 and August 1801 he had resigned as *veldcornet* - but Maritz was no doubt delighted to be able to find good reasons to refuse this request from a person he characterised as a "Belials mannen".⁴³

There had been earlier indications that the San were no longer predisposed to keep the peace. In September 1800 a commando was despatched to the vicinity of the Groot River in pursuit of San

40. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.33-35.

41. The inhabitants of the Roggeveld acknowledged that whilst gifts of livestock and game kept the San from committing acts of robbery, they preferred tobacco and dagga above all else. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.- 7 Jan. 1805.

42. For evidence of the severe drought of these years see CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 9 Sept. 1800; CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 19 Oct. 1801; CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 6 May 1801. See also Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.231.

43. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, Aug. 1801. It was possible that Visser was troubled by ill health at this time. He had been expected to accompany the Truter-Somerville expedition to the Tswana in October 1801 but "was not able from indisposition to accompany the commission", Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, p.362.

robbers who had chosen the cattle of Gerrit Visser, Floris's son, as their target. By May 1801, the date when Kicherer and his followers departed for the Orange River, there was a perception that the peace with the San was now in tatters and would remain so for as long as the missionaries were away. Gerrit Maritz and Jacob Kruger (Jacob Kruger, Jacob's son, was the erstwhile currency forger and fugitive from justice - not the same man as Jacob Kruger the *veldcornet* of the Klein Roggeveld)⁴⁴ wrote to the *landdrost* from the Roggeveld to suggest that the time had arrived for a new peace initiative, in which Kruger would supersede Visser as "peace maker" to the San.

Jacob Kruger's credentials for this post were, so he claimed, that he had lived at peace amongst the San for thirteen years. These years would have fallen between his flight from the colony in 1783 and the date of his letter, 1801.⁴⁵ During this time he and his brother Carel had survived as elephant hunters, living with the Korana on both sides of the Orange River. Carel was trampled to death by an enraged wounded elephant near Kareeberg in 1791. According to Lichtenstein Carel's Korana companions, on discovering the mangled corpse of their leader, assumed that he had been killed by the San of the Kareeberg. They went in pursuit of these suspects and, with *knobkierries* and assegais, clubbed and stabbed them to death. On viewing his brother's corpse Jacob realised that the San had been innocent but it was, perhaps, this incident that somewhat soured his relations with the Kareeberg San.⁴⁶

44. For details concerning Jacob Kruger and his brother Carel see E. Mossop, "Lives of the Earlier Krugers", pp.209-217, 225-227. Lichtenstein described Jacob Kruger, whom he met in 1805, as follows: "Guilt and repentance had made deep furrows on his countenance: he spoke little, and scarcely ever was his mouth distended into a smile. In his sunken eyes was an expression rather of contempt of danger, than of youthful courage. A large grey beard, thick eye-brows, and long hair hanging over his face gave him a wild and formidable appearance. He was armed with a short, thick elephant gun, which carried shot of a quarter of a pound weight." *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.253.

45. Mossop was not aware of the existence of Jacob Kruger's letter of 1801 when he compiled his "Lives of the Earlier Krugers". The letter is to be found in CA, 1/STB 10/153, Jacob Kruger - Landdrost, 6 May 1801. It is probably as well to clear up a misunderstanding derived from Barrow and repeated by E. and F. Bradlow in their edition of William Somerville's *Narrative*, (p.71, n). The Kruger brothers did not escape from Robben Island in a boat made of dried skins. They were, however, joined by a Robben Island escapee, Jan Jurgen Meyer, in 1785. See Mossop, "Lives", pp.216-217.

46. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.266-267; E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.71-72. Carel was buried under a pile of stones at a place known as Carel Kruger's Graf or Graffontein (about thirty miles north of Camarvon). The grave was adorned with elephant bones and the skull of a hartebeest. In October 1801 a certain Jurgen Kok, returning from the Orange River, saw fit to saw off the hartebeest horns and make tobacco pipes from them. (E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, pp.71-72; Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, p.368). Jacob, who accompanied both the Truter-Somerville expedition in 1801 and Lichtenstein's party of 1805, was able to repair the grave on these occasions. (Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.267). See also Mossop, "Lives", p.217.

He admitted to the *landdrost* that he had only made peace with them the year before Visser's peace initiative, i.e., about 1797. He implied, however, that it was he who should receive credit for pacifying them a full year before Visser had approached them. Now that they were once more engaged in acts of robbery he, Jacob Kruger, out of a desire to promote the welfare of the land, was prepared to re-open negotiations with this "inconstant people". All he asked in exchange for this selfless offer was that he be allowed to shoot game, both for himself and the San, during the course of his undertaking. He also asked that he be re-granted his farms in the Nieuweveld, the payment for which had lapsed during his unavoidable absences from the region (due to drought and commando duty) and which had resulted in the unwelcome occupancy of his property by Dawit Horn and Jan Bosch.⁴⁷

Maritz supported Kruger's suggestions most strongly, emphasising that "Jacob Kruger is de eerst vrede maake geweest lang voor Floris Visser aan de groote rivier in ook ande Care bergen toen Visser gagaan is hat Kruger haar luij over gehadt to vrede". The San would be used to Kruger, argued Maritz, whereas if Horn was allowed to occupy his farms he would stir up trouble amongst them. If Kruger was allowed to go to the Kareeberg he would help to restore the peace in the absence of Kicherer.⁴⁸ We do not know whether Kruger was immediately allowed to reoccupy his old farms but it does not seem as though the authorities were willing to give him unconditional freedom of action.⁴⁹ He was, instead, probably obliged to accompany the Truter-Somerville

47. CA, I/STB 10/153, Jacob Kruger - Landdrost, 6 May 1801; Maritz - Landdrost, 7 May 1801. The fact that Jacob Kruger had registered the loan-farms "Ratel Vontyn" and "Blom Vontyn" in the Nieuweveld (there is no record of this in the RLR records) before 1801, as well as the fact that he had been summoned to participate in commandos in Graaff-Reinet in September 1800 and April 1801, suggests that he had been pardoned before these dates. Lichtenstein (*Travels*, Vol. 2, p.253) states that he returned to the colony after Carel's death and obtained a pardon on condition that he furnished the government with the information he had obtained during his wanderings beyond the colony. Barrow's supposition - that he was brought a pardon by the Truter-Somerville expedition would seem to be incorrect, since the expedition post-dated Jacob's letter of May 1801. (E. and F. Bradlow, *Somerville*, p.71, n.94). It is, however, clear that Jacob was expected to accompany and assist the expedition. Surprisingly, Mossop fails to realise that the Jacob Kruger who accompanied Truter-Somerville (and, later Lichtenstein), was the same Jacob Kruger who fled the colony in 1783. Burchell's statement - that Jacob was only allowed to return to the colony after the second British occupation (*Travels*, Vol. I, p.144) is obviously incorrect.

48. "Jacob Kruger was the first peace maker, long before Floris Visser went to the Great River or the kareeberg. When Visser went Kruger had already turned them to peace." CA, I/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, 7 May 1801.

49. An interesting observation in Colonel Collins' report of 1809 throws some light on this matter. Commenting on the appropriateness of the situation of the Sak River mission station Collins remarked: "Should any objection arise to the re-occupancy of this spot, the Bloom or Raatel Fontein, at the distance of one or two days' journey east of it, might be chosen, and would perhaps be even preferable, as it is said to afford better water and pasturage. Mr Kicherer, at whose disposal it seems government had left a large tract, situated between the Riet and Zak Rivers, had permitted an inhabitant named Krieger to take this spot as a temporary residence, in consequence of his friendly disposition towards the Bosjesmen." Moodie, *The Record*, Vol. V, p.23. In 1806 it is recorded that Kruger was granted two adjoining farms, "de Bloemfontein and de Damsfontein between the Steenkampsberg and the boundary of the hindmost Nieuweveld." Mossop, "Lives", p.226.

expedition and, in any event, Visser did not lose his pre-eminent position as peace maker as a result of the intervention of Kruger and Maritz.

In fact, in August 1801, Visser requested permission to journey to the Orange River so as to join the missionaries and visit the San. Maritz was strongly opposed to this, maintaining that Kicherer had told him that the disturbances amongst the San, and their flight from his mission station, dated from Visser's last visit to them. Maritz urged that, should the *landdrost* nevertheless see fit to grant Visser his request, he should not be entrusted with the colonists' donations of livestock, nor be allowed to go with a group of people. Visser's custom of travelling with a large retinue of Khoikhoi and "Bastaards", claimed Maritz, worked against the interests of the San, since the colonial party shot so much game that there was nothing left for the supposed recipients of this largesse to hunt. They were, in consequence, obliged to steal, thereby nullifying the object of the exercise, whilst Maritz and his men were punctiliously collecting donations of livestock. Maritz concluded his protest by urging the *landdrost* not to allow Visser to undertake any initiative without his, Maritz's, fore-knowledge.⁵⁰

As it happened Visser was too ill to journey to the Orange at that time⁵¹ but, despite Maritz's vilification's, he seems to have remained indispensable. In February 1802 a report came from Gerrit Snyman, of Riet River in the Roggeveld, that Visser had once again succeeded in making peace with some of the San. Since these people were now returning to visit the colonists there was a need to supply them with meat and Snyman therefore requested, in Visser's name, that the *landdrost* supply powder and shot for a hunting party.⁵² It is evident that Visser - called "Father" by the San - retained his authority until at least the end of 1804, supervising the distribution of livestock and game to the San and exerting an unrivalled influence over them.⁵³ In September 1803 Visser had been well enough to act as guide to the LMS missionary, Aart van der Lingen. The latter individual had joined his colleagues Edwards and Kok, far to the north of the Orange River, in their mission to the Tlhaping around Dithakong.⁵⁴ The fact that the South African Missionary Society recommended Visser as Van der Lingen's guide is further testimony to the frontiersman's enduring reputation for both piety and pioneering prowess.

50. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Maritz - Landdrost, Aug. 1801.

51. See note above.

52. CA, 1/STB 10/153, Gerrit Snyman - Landdrost, 20 Feb. 1802.

53. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.- 7 Jan. 1805. Kicherer too was called "father" or "Ebo" by the San. See *Narrative*, p.10.

54. Du Bruyn, "Sending onder die Tlhaping", pp. 34-35.

In March 1802, however, those missionaries who had returned from the Orange River found the situation around the Sak River to be far from settled. Any hopes that Kicherer's presence would have an instant calming effect were dashed following the hostile reception which his passage through Bushmanland had provoked. Though there was a strong case to be made for knuckling down to the task of forming a "regular settlement" at the Sak River Kicherer decided to visit Cape Town first. After months spent in the wilderness the impulse behind this trip is understandable as Kicherer needed to restore himself and obtain replenishing supplies for the mission. The government's faith in the beneficial aspects of his endeavours were obviously undiminished since General Dundas, the governor, gave the missionary a gift of 100 pounds. A large part of the money was spent on clothing for future converts since Kicherer deemed such articles to be necessary adornments for Christians. Despite tempting and repeated offers to accept the vacant post at the Roodezand church (which Vos had vacated under a cloud of ill-deserved scandal)⁵⁵ Kicherer returned to the Sak River where, together with Scholtz, the great work began anew.⁵⁶

From the outset it was apparent that the focus of evangelical effort would now be the more receptive Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" of the vicinity. The majority of the San had displayed, in no uncertain terms, their indifference to the gospel and their rejection of the discipline of mission station life. But, according to Kicherer, large numbers of Khoikhoi flocked to the re-established mission, including "hundreds" from the Cedarberg in 1803.⁵⁷ In time a church, a dwelling house, a vegetable garden and a cattle kraal were constructed. Eventually, too, the baptised converts built themselves "decent habitations, in the Farmer's style" whilst the unbaptised erected Khoikhoi huts behind the house. Since the church (about sixty feet by thirty) and dwelling house were built of stone a considerable expenditure of labour was required and Kicherer did not find the "naturally indolent" Khoikhoi keen to supply it. Only after threatening his flock with his departure to take up the living at Roodezand did Kicherer blackmail them into consenting to work for two hours a day.⁵⁸ Sometimes, something more than moral persuasion was necessary⁵⁹ and it was, perhaps, fortunate that the local farmers lent him two slaves - one a

55. Vos had been accused of committing adultery with various women in Roodezand and of fathering a child on his woman servant. Even though he confessed that "I have been married 21 years to a creature (O God, deliver me from her!) who has no natural love for me and is full of sulks and moodiness", he does not seem to have acted as his enemies claimed. See Boeseken and Cairns, *The Secluded Valley*, pp.105-108 for details.

56. Kicherer, *Narrative*, p.36; *Reizen*, p.266.

57. Kicherer, *Reizen*, p.279.

58. Kicherer, *Narrative*, pp.36-37.

59. On 1 June 1802 Kicherer wrote to the *landdrost* requesting him to order *Veldcornet* Jacobus Nel to capture a certain "Bastaard" by the name of Stoffel who had been at the mission. Stoffel was to be taken to Stellenbosch and punished because "deese Bastert heeft zeer veel Brutaliteiten en andere slegte dingen by mij begaan, dikwils heb ik hom in vriendelyke gewaar-schuurd, dag alles vrugteloo, zoo dat ik my in de uitterste nood sakelykheid bevind om

carpenter and the other a mason - for without their help the building work would have advanced extremely slowly.⁶⁰

Spiritually, sufficient progress had been made by 3 October 1802 to warrant the baptism of four Khoikhoi men and two women. The ceremony was witnessed by - amongst other colonists - Gerrit Maritz, and tremendous enthusiasm accompanied these conversions.⁶¹ Further baptisms followed and on Christmas Day, 1802, another four men and twelve women became converts. By the time Kicherer and Scholtz left Sak River on 17 January 1803 there were eight-three baptised heathen at the settlement out of a total of about six hundred people.⁶² The large number of mission adherents is impressive testimony both to the appeal of the gospel and to the substantial amount of material support which was being donated. Without contributions from the ZAG and the colonial farmers it would have been impossible for such a multitude to sustain itself in a region normally lacking in natural abundance.⁶³

This was, however, the peak of missionary success at the Sak River. The departure of Kicherer and Scholtz in January 1803 was an undoubted damper on the recently kindled spirits of the neophytes and was, for this reason, ill advised.⁶⁴ But Kicherer was determined to go to Europe and exhibit examples of converted Khoikhoi to interested or influential Christians. Partly, no doubt, this resolution was shaped by the laudable intention of obtaining greater encouragement and support (both spiritual and financial) for the South African missionary field. Kicherer's own explanation for his visit to Europe was that he was in poor health; that he had to attend to

u wel edde te versoeken my hier in te assistentie te vertrekken, op dat sulks zo voor hom als voor andere kwaadwillige van mijn volk, tot een middel moegt vertrekken om niet langer de goede behandeling welke onder hun plaats heeft, te misbruiken, voor mij, geloof dat de gevolgen van zeer veel vrugt sullen zijn." In a post script Kicherer added: "versoeke echter niet meerde straf als een goed pak slaagen." CA, 1/STB 10/153, Kicherer - Landdrost, 1 June 1802.

60. Kicherer, "Narrative", pp.36-38.

61. Kicherer, "Reize", pp.273-276; "Narrative", pp.40-44. Maritz was probably making a conscious effort to replace Visser as the friend of the missionaries.

62. See CA, VC 658, Extract uit het Dagboek der Gemeente Jesu Christe aan de Zak Rivier, 1802-1805.

63. It is probable that some of these people lived in small kraals scattered about the mission within a circuit of three to four miles. This, at least, was what Lichtenstein reported in 1805. "All these places were the habitations only of single families, and all had a like melancholy aspect. A little scanty spring, a hut of rushes, full of filth and vermin, a little cattle kraal, with a low fence round it, and, at the utmost, eight or ten meagre oxen, are the most striking objects by which such a spot, standing in the midst of a most naked and unfruitful district, is distinguished. The Hottentots who have selected such a place of residence belong to Kicherer's Institution; but have separated themselves from the rest, or being the richer part of the community, and not willing to share their wealth with their poorer brethren." Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.433-434.

64. Kicherer's restlessness is one of the reasons Du Plessis believes the mission failed. See *Christian Missions*, p.105.

important domestic concerns; and that he wished to consult with the Directors of the LMS on the best measures to be adopted in the future.⁶⁵ Perhaps, though, Kicherer was not altogether unmoved by the agreeable knowledge that his "Hottentots" - a man and two women - would cause a sensation in Europe and that he would be feted wherever he went.⁶⁶ Though it seems churlish to begrudge Kicherer this small pleasure we should note that his detractors were loath to credit him with these conversions⁶⁷ and it could well be asked whether it was advisable to test the steadfastness of those new converts who stayed behind by leaving them, so soon, without his guidance. The simultaneous departure of Scholtz, who sought to further his formal education, left the bereaved faithful under the guidance of a colonist by the name of Christiaan Botma. Though Botma had been with Kicherer, Kramer, Anderson and Scholtz at the Orange River,⁶⁸ and though he was regarded by all who met him as worthy and pious, he seems to have lacked the charisma of Kicherer.⁶⁹

Under Botma's supervision the number of adherents to the mission had fallen, by July 1804, to ninety-five, thirteen of whom could read and sixteen of whom could write.⁷⁰ This was, however, by no means a stable population as membership fluctuated according to the supplies obtainable at the mission or the availability of natural resources elsewhere. There was, moreover, a change in the composition of the membership for when Lichtenstein visited the mission in May 1805 he observed that:

Most of those that remained here were Bastard-Hottentots: several of them were entirely white; and the greater part had been baptised before they came hither: some

65. Kicherer, "Narrative", p.46.

66. Elsa Joubert, in her novel *Missionaris*, (based on the life of the LMS missionary Van der Lingen) perceptively suggests that Kicherer was attempting to duplicate the excitement which greeted the arrival of Omai, a native of Huahine, in England in 1774. See *Missionaris* (Cape Town, 1989) pp.262-3. On Omai see B. Smith, *European Vision*, pp.58-60, 80, 101, 105, 107. On the reception of the "Hottentots" in England see Anonymous, "The Converted Hottentots" (London, 1804). See also Lichtenstein's caustic comments in *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.231.

67. Lichtenstein stated that the converts "had several years before been baptised at Cape Town by the preacher Fleck." *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.231. Kicherer took care to stress that all three had been baptised by him. The first, Martha Arendse, was an elderly widow of Khoikhoi parentage who had been born in Graaff-Reinet but who came to Kicherer from the vicinity of Cape Town in order to be his housekeeper. The second, Klaas van Rooij was a Khoikhoi and married to the third, Sara Fortuin. Sara was, on her mother's side, descended from the Khoikhoi but her father was a Bouganese slave. Both had come from the Koue Bokkeveld and Cedarberg to join Kicherer. "Reizen", p.281.

68. Theal, *Records*, Vol. IV, p.373.

69. "Mr K. left the congregation under the care of Mr. Botma, a worthy pious man, a native, who had been a Farmer, but being determined to devote himself to the service of Christ and souls, he had sold all his good and become a preacher of the Gospel." Kicherer, "Narrative", p.48, note. See also Lichtenstein's comments, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.231-232.

70. De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", p.273.

were even born of christian (sic) parents. Not one among them were pure absolute Hottentots: all of that description had forsaken the institution: those that remained were of the old original stock, the elect that Kicherer had brought with him to form and instruct the others: these alone adhered steadily to their calling.⁷¹

Thus, the mission which had been founded to minister to the San was, if we are to believe Lichtenstein, no longer ministering either to them or to the Khoikhoi. Nor was the quality of those who remained at the mission station much to enthuse over:

they would have been much better employed in the service of the colonists, providing for their wants by industry, than pursuing, as they did here, lives wholly useless, and abandoned to sloth. Their indolence was indeed absolutely insupportable: instead of occupying themselves in husbandry, or at least in taking care of the few cattle remaining to them, they passed the whole day in their huts in complete idleness...The whole stock of sheep and cattle, which at first had been very large, was now reduced to about three hundred sheep and forty oxen. The kraals where they used to be inclosed at night were fallen into ruins, and no attempt was ever made to repair them; the cattle lay among the huts, or were left to run about at their pleasure; in consequence of this the little garden which the missionary once had was all trodden down, the springs were fouled, and other mischief was done by them. In short, such was the universal sloth and negligence, that no one could remain here, but with great reluctance, and from strong necessity. Botma had, indeed, made some efforts to correct these abuses, by setting a good example in his own person. He had enclosed a piece of land of about an acre and a half, with a hedge, which was destined for growing corn, and vegetables for the kitchen; but more than once a whole side of the hedge had been carried away by his pupils to spare themselves the trouble of going further for firewood.⁷²

The *landdrost* of the newly proclaimed district of Tulbagh, Henry van der Graaf, who was with Lichtenstein at the time, threatened to carry away these indolent loafers to labour at the public works if they did not exert themselves for their own maintenance. Botma, who had neither the means nor the inclination to enforce industry, could only hope that the return of Kicherer would see the commencement of a more fortunate era in the institution's history.⁷³ Alas, this was not to be.

71. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.233.

72. Ibid, pp.233-234.

73. Ibid, pp.234-235.

THE END OF THE SAK RIVER MISSION

Kicherer's departure for Europe had coincided with the advent of a new Government at the Cape. From early 1803 to 1806 the short-lived Batavian Republic replaced the British as rulers. With few exceptions the Batavians were extremely ill-disposed towards missionaries and their activities.⁷⁴ Since the San had displayed their hostility to both the civilising and evangelising efforts of the missionaries the new government was obliged to place far greater reliance on the temporal authorities of the frontier zone - a shift in emphasis which, in any case, it welcomed. Relations between *trekboers* and the San remained uneasy. Like their predecessors the Batavians felt obliged to address this problem and stamp government authority over the restless people of the frontier zone. One of the measures taken in order to achieve this end was an administrative reform - the division of the colony into more districts or *drostdies*. Thus it was that the huge magisterial area of Stellenbosch was sub-divided in 1804, its northern hinterland detached to form the district of Tulbagh, and a new *drostdy* of that name being established at Roodezand. At the same time a slight northerly adjustment of the colonial boundary was made so that the limits of the colony were now deemed to run along the Sak rather than the Riet River.⁷⁵

A second step towards increasing government authority within the frontier zone was for the new *landdrost* of Tulbagh, Henry van der Graaf, to undertake a journey to the north and enter into negotiations with the San. It was the government's policy, according to Lichtenstein:

to regulate the relations between the colonists on the northern boundary, and the wandering Bosjesmans of that neighbourhood, and to watch particularly over the behaviour of each party towards the other. It was the earnest wish of the government to put an end to the robberies and plunderings of these savages by mild and kind treatment, and by this means gradually to remove the ancient hatred borne them by the colonists of the Roggeveld, and the Lower Bokkeveld.⁷⁶

Although these policies were by no means original the need for their implementation was brought home to the authorities most strongly in November 1804. In that month Van der Graaf was informed, by *Veldcommandant* Jacob Kruger, of an incident which had taken place on 13 August. On that date Pieter Ollsen (or Oelsen), the *knecht* of a certain Leopold Heuzen (alternatively

74. The most thorough analysis of the relationship between the Batavians and the missionaries is to be found in P.S. de Jongh's "Sendingwerk In Die Landdrostdistrikte Stellenbosch En Tulbagh". See also W.M. Freund, "The Cape under the transitional governments, 1795-1814", in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840* (Cape Town, 1989), pp.340-341.

75. J.P. van der Merwe, *Die Kaap Onder Die Bataafse Republiek 1803-1806*, (Amsterdam, 1926), pp.127-139; J.S. Bergh and J.C. Visagie, *The East Cape Frontier Zone 1660-1980* (Durban, 1985), pp.18-19.

76. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.189.

Huyser or Heuser),⁷⁷ had killed four of the followers of the San Captain, Goedhart, in the vicinity of the Sak River. Goedhart had threatened that, if he had not received satisfaction within the space of five months, he would take his own revenge.⁷⁸

When this alarming intelligence reached Governor J.W. Janssens, he and his Council decided to restore peace between "the frontiersmen and the indigenes" as quickly as possible by despatching a "solemn commission" to investigate the matter on the spot. Van der Graaf was duly delegated to lead the commission but, not surprisingly, by the time he arrived in the Roggeveld Pieter Ollsen was not to be found. The district was suffering from a terrible drought and the local farmers were in a state of continuous flux, moving their livestock from one place to another and certainly not remaining south of the Sak River. In these circumstances there was bound to be conflict between the San and the colonists. In fact, whilst Van der Graaf's commission waited for Captain Goedhart to respond to their invitation to negotiate, an incident occurred which was probably all too typical of the Sak River frontier. Two Khoisan servants of a local colonist, Jan Botma, were killed by a group of San under the authority of Dirk Pampier - a man known to Floris Visser (who was assisting the commission) as a cattle thief. This news caused Goedhart, who was travelling south from Schietfontein in the Kareeberg, to turn back, since he feared he would be held responsible for the slayings by the colonists. Visser was quickly sent to assure him that this would not be the case and, on 16 December, Goedhart and his followers met to parley with the colonial commission.⁷⁹

Thanks to the linguistic skills of Visser's son, Gerrit, a peace settlement was achieved. Goedhart, who was accused of having been responsible for three different robberies, was promised a Captain's staff if he kept the peace. No doubt he was also promised that Ollsen would be brought to justice. Lichtenstein, who was not at the meeting, reported that:

the negotiators succeeded so far as to obtain promises, on the part of the Bosjemans, that in consideration of the yearly tribute of cattle to be paid them, they would maintain a quiet and peaceable conduct and would deliver up to punishment any one who was guilty of violence or plunder. On the other hand, they were solemnly promised that no colonist should take into his own hands the right of punishing injuries received by him; and that they should not be pursued for past offences. It was alleged that the government should take upon itself the arrangement of all differences, and send, every year, proper commissions to hear any complaints they might have to make, and to see that justice was done them. This interview lasted a

77. De Villiers and Pama, Vol. 1, p.347, describes Johann Leopold Heuser as a "bekende skaap-en veeboer".

78. CA, BR 57, Resolusies, 21 Nov.- 29 Nov. 1804, 23 Nov. 1804, pp.28-31.

79. Ibid.

whole week, and was made the more agreeable to the savages, from their being entertained by the *landdrost* during the whole time that it continued, and from their being dismissed with a considerable present of live sheep. At parting, they were promised that within six months the *landdrost* would return, that the negotiation might be regularly and solemnly concluded, when he would bring them many presents.⁸⁰

This arrangement, like all the others which had preceded it, suffered from major drawbacks. It had been concluded with only one group of the San and was therefore not binding to any other groups. Similarly, there was no effective way of enforcing the provisions of the agreement since a biannual visit from distant commissioners - even if it took place, was hardly likely to keep the peace. Drought was the pressing necessity which drove rival groups to compete for scarce resources and, so long as it occurred, conflict was virtually inevitable.

At the same time as Floris Visser was assisting Van der Graaf at the Sak River a petition, composed by the inhabitants of the Middle Roggeveld, reached Governor Janssen and the Council of Policy. This request, written in September 1804, took three months to reach the governor and amounted to a thorough indictment of Floris Visser. Though no signatures were appended to the copy received by the governor the provenance of the document, as well as its contents, make it more than likely that it was yet another broadside fired by Gerrit Maritz against his inveterate enemy. The authors of the petition were no doubt aware of the scepticism with which the Batavian authorities viewed the endeavours of the LMS missionaries for they took pains to link all that was, in their eyes, objectionable about the Sak River mission station to Visser's baleful influence. It was Visser's insistence on education and fatherly love (they argued) that encouraged the continuation of such an unproductive community. Likewise, his role - as provider of livestock and game to the San, though it had contributed to the maintenance of peace, was a cloak to mask self-interest. Exaggerating his own authority Visser abused his position of "teacher" to the San in order to indulge in all sorts of dubious activities. For instance, (his detractors continued) a year ago he had made it known that he intended to journey to the Great River in order to placate a hostile group of San who had vowed to ravage the Roggeveld. This group had, apparently, been attacked by some Korana and swore that, unless they were recompensed, they would attack the colony. Although this all seemed very unlikely to the Roggevelders Visser had, none the less, journeyed northwards. But, far from concluding peace with the San of the Orange River (who had, in any event, been peaceful long before Visser arrived) Visser crossed over the river in

80. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.191.

January 1804 "en zelfs tot de Briquas is geryst, en waarschylijk met een geheel ander oog merk met als met de Bosjemans vrede te maake".⁸¹

Despite these insinuations the petitioners from the Middle Roggeveld did not suggest that Visser and his son Gerrit be stripped of their exclusive rights to hunt game over the Sak River. Instead, they acknowledged that the provision of game to the San was essential and implied that the Vissers were the best men for the job. They did, however, request that the Vissers be prohibited from going to the Orange River without permission and that their supplies of ammunition be rationed. What caused them the greatest concern was the unprecedented destruction of game which had taken place in all of the districts of the northern frontier zone. Partly this was due to the colonists of these regions wishing to spare their own stock. But, ironically, the problem was also compounded by colonists who shot game for the San in order to buy their goodwill. The consequences of such excessive and unregulated hunting were ultimately disastrous, for the San, not being able to hunt for themselves, ended up stealing the colonists' stock anyway. Elands, quaggas, "wilde ezels" and buffaloes were especially scarce and the petitioners suggested that a fine of one hundred Rijksdaalders be levied on those found guilty of shooting them without permission.⁸² Thus the petition, which had started as an attack on Floris Visser, concluded with a plea for stricter control over hunters in Bushmanland. It was a sad indication that the extermination of game had already reached a magnitude which threatened the existence of the San. This, combined with the droughts, undermined all long-term prospects for peaceful co-existence.

The impossibility of achieving a lasting peace in these circumstances was brought home to those representatives of the Batavian government who, in 1805, sought to consolidate the negotiations of the previous year. In May 1805 *Landdrost* Van der Graaf, accompanied by Lichtenstein, left Tulbagh with the intention of journeying, via the Roggeveld and the Sak River, to the Tswana. That year a great many colonists had left the heights of the Roggeveld escarpment and come down to the still parched Tanqua Karoo a lot earlier than usual on account of the extreme drought, horse sickness and intensified San attacks. There had been attacks in February and, more recently, more than two hundred cattle and an even greater quantity of sheep had been stolen. Herdsmen and shepherds had been killed whilst the corpse of the *landdrost's* Khoikhoi

81. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.- 7 Jan. 1805, petition from the inhabitants of the Roggeveld to the Commissaris for Tulbagh, H. L. Blettermann, which he forwarded to the Governor General, Janssen, and the Council of Policy, 11 December 1804, pp.50-56. "And himself went to the Briquas with, probably, completely different intentions than making peace with the Bushmen."

82. CA, BR 61, Resolusies, 3 Jan.- 7 Jan. 1805.

messenger was found riddled with arrows. From the Nieuweveld too came reports of substantial stock loss so that it seemed as if the entire northern frontier zone was in a renewed state of turmoil.⁸³

The government commissioners found that the mission station itself was not exempt from San attacks for, on visiting Sak River, they were told that the week before their arrival the flocks belonging to those in attendance at the mission had been driven away by the San. Though the stock was recovered, two of the "Bastaards" who gave pursuit were wounded by poisoned arrows - one fatally.⁸⁴

In the meantime, Captain Goedhart, on whom Van der Graaf had pinned so many hopes, proved to be a disappointment. According to some San informants at the Sak River:

he was a thorough rascal, on whom no dependence was to be placed: he had begun to rob and plunder again immediately after the *landdrost's* visit, and the treaty made with him: he was, they said, the instigator of all the depredations committed; and the information that we were coming had therefore terrified him to such a degree, that he, with all his people, had fled into the Karee mountains. There, they added, we might very likely find him, with a herd of four hundred cattle, which he had collected by his robberies within the last few months.⁸⁵

Notwithstanding the possibly prejudiced source of this information it would seem that Goedhart had indeed broken his vows. When the Commission passed through the Kareeberg on its way to the Orange River it found abundant evidence that the San were harbouring stolen cattle there - in order to consume them at their leisure.⁸⁶ Despite the efforts of the commissioners to re-establish peaceful negotiations with Goedhart he took care to avoid them and was still pursuing a

83. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.190, 208, 212-213; Jacobus Nel - Landdrost of Tulbagh, 7 Feb. 1805, in Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol. XXXI, p.15. Also J.S. Olivier - Landdrost of Tulbagh, 18 Feb. 1805, in Theal, *Records*, Vol. XXXI, p.15.

84. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.236-237.

85. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.238.

86. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.258-259. Lichtenstein's comments on the use the San made of livestock are important since they confirm that the San consumed rather than farmed animals, i.e. they remained hunter-gatherers rather than pastoralists. "According to the quantity of tracks, our colonists estimated the cattle that they had with them at a hundred oxen, and three hundred sheep. With such a stock, the Bosjesmans become shy and full of fears, and are not likely to think of commencing an attack. They are not perfectly happy till all is eaten, and they are secure that their prey cannot be taken from them. Such a stock therefore does not last for more than a few weeks, since all the Bosjesmans, far and near, when they hear of the fare that is to be had, hasten to partake of it, and the company does not separate till every morsel is demolished."

successful career as a stock thief in October, at which date further reports of his robberies were received by Van der Graaf.⁸⁷

These, and other instances of San hostility,⁸⁸ encouraged Lichtenstein and Van der Graaf to suggest a new method of "civilising" the San. They proposed to Governor Janssens that a force of soldiers be sent to assist the colonists. The incorrigible San should, if possible, be captured and imprisoned in a place close to Cape Town, Robben Island for instance, where they would be forced to work:

It might then be hoped that, by degrees, though perhaps not till the second generation, they would be led to adopt more active and civilised lives. To this, the teaching them to have more than one want would essentially contribute, since now they had but one - that of food. A double good would in this way be attained; the borders would be free from a terrible evil, and these poor creatures would be excited to aim at a higher degree of cultivation. As a reward for good behaviour, the best might gradually be restored to liberty, and allowed to return home, where they might introduce something like civilisation among their countrymen.⁸⁹

Though Governor Janssens was unable to adopt this suggestion (partly because he did not have the forces available and partly because he and his government were expelled by the British the following year) it may be seen that the authorities had moved a long way away from the principles of the proclamation of 1798 and a belief in the civilising virtues of voluntary Christian instruction. The best school was now deemed to be a prison and the best course a spell of hard labour.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Sak River mission became more and more redundant. Even though Kicherer returned to the mission on 8 October 1805, fortified with an

87. On 8 October *Veldcornet* J.S. Olivier wrote to Van der Graaf to report that two San, Ruyter and Prins, had tracked a herd of stolen cattle to Goedhart's kraal. Just as Olivier was setting out with a commando to deal with the kraal he heard that the San had crossed the Sak River and murdered Christiaan Koopman in the most barbarous manner - "43 arrows were found in his body, together with some wounds from an assegai, and his head had been dashed to pieces with a stone". Fearing that these San were now at loose in the Nieuweveld Olivier's commando returned but were unable to fall in with the killers. Olivier planned to attack Goedhart as soon as he was given reinforcements. Letter in Theal, *Records*, Vol. XXXI, p.16.

88. In August 1805 *Veldcornet* Jacobus Nel, who had accompanied Van der Graaf and Lichtenstein to the Roggeveld, reported to the *landdrost* that in his absence the San had killed two of his father's Khoikhoi and stolen eight of Isaac Davel's oxen. Nel was unable to catch them. The San had also robbed Christopher van Wyk and Pieter van Zyl - though two of them had been shot dead in the process. Nel asked permission to organise a commando in September. Jacobus Nel - Landdrost of Tulbagh, 20 Aug. 1805, in Theal, *Records*, Vol. XXXI, pp.15-16.

89. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.240-241.

assistant, new ideas, renewed funding and the support of additional LMS missionaries in the southern African field,⁹⁰ it was not enough. The mission collapsed less than a year later. Environmental reasons played a major part in this defeat. A prolonged and serious drought afflicted the region. Some indication of the intensity of the drought may be gauged from the fact that, by 1806, the Sak River had been entirely dry for six years.⁹¹ There was thus insufficient grazing for the mission's livestock. No crops could flourish and all the game trekked away.

These environmental hardships were bad enough for experienced pastoralists like the Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" of the mission. For trainee pastoralists or agriculturalists (such as the San were supposed to be) they were disastrous, and the hunter-gatherer people had no option but to continue their time honoured way of life. The drought made conflict between the San and the *trekboers* inevitable whilst the increasing slaughter of game did little to promote the long-term welfare of the San. Colonists were becoming more reluctant to part with donations of livestock⁹² and resentful that vast areas of Bushmanland were closed to them. Consequently neither the San nor the *trekboers* observed the prohibition against crossing the boundary of the Sak River and the level of violence rapidly escalated to pre-1798 levels. The death of Floris Visser, some time in 1805, was a further blow to prospects of peace.⁹³

In November, shortly after Kicherer's return to the mission, there was a massive San raid on the Christian's property in which 200 sheep were stolen. These sheep had been purchased from a certain H. van Aswegen (proof that donations of livestock were beginning to dry up) and were in the process of being driven to the mission station by two "Bastaards" when the San launched a night attack, wounding the shepherds and stealing the stock. A commando was despatched under the leadership of *Veldcornet* J.S. Olivier and, with the assistance of six "peacemaking Buchmen", the robbers were tracked beyond the Sak River. It was discovered that the San had also succeeded in stealing over a hundred oxen from somewhere else. The oxen were recovered but none of the

90. Kicherer returned to Cape Town in January with J.G. Ullbricht, Christian and Abraham Albrecht, Arie Vos and J. Seidenfaden. Vos went to help Kicherer at Sak River. Ullbricht joined Van der Kemp and Seidenfaden and the Albrecht brothers went to Namaqualand. LMS, *Register of Missionaries*, p.6; De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.273-276.

91. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.255.

92. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.231.

93. I have not found a direct mention of Visser's death but in December 1805 *Veldcornet* Snyman of the Middle Roggeveld wrote to the *landdrost* of Tulbagh to report: "I beg to inform you that the Bushmen have killed about 200 sheep belonging to the widow F. Visser, and her servants shot one of the party. I followed their footsteps with a commando, but could not follow up the track in consequence of the stones and mountains over which they must have passed." Theal, *Records*, Vol. XXXI, p.18.

sheep was left alive. Nine San were killed by the commando but this did nothing to promote the mission's viability.⁹⁴

Apart from the hostility of both the environment and the San Kicherer himself must take some of the blame for the mission's failure. He had not been back at the Sak River very long before he accepted the government's proffered position of minister at Graaff-Reinet. Once more he deserted his fragile flock at a crucial time. Though he remained nominal head of the mission his removal to Graaff-Reinet was, effectively, the end of the experiment and, on 3 August 1806, the Sak River mission was abandoned.⁹⁵ Some of the converts trekked north to join the Christian community at Klaarwater or the new LMS mission at Steinkopf. Others decided to follow Kicherer to Graaff-Reinet, placing themselves in the temporary employment of the colonists of that vicinity in the hope that, one day, the mission would be re-established.⁹⁶

There is also evidence that Kicherer's mission aroused extraordinary fear and mistrust amongst certain colonial frontiersmen who clearly perceived it to be a device through which the government intended to empower the Khoisan whilst imperilling the white farmers. Barrow quotes an extract from a letter written by O.A.S. Meyer of the Sneeuberg on 29 January 1803 to a certain Cornelis de Kok in Cape Town. The letter does more than "serve to shew ... of what deliberate and bloodthirsty ruffians the peasantry of the Cape are composed".⁹⁷ It also shows how rumours circulated between the northern and eastern frontier zones, stirring deep rooted insecurities and precipitating acts of violent cruelty:

I am going to inform you of something that happened on the 6th of December 1802. About the evening three Bosjesmans came to the house of the Burger Cornelis Jansen, having with them three pack-oxen (*draag-ossen*); the said Jansen immediately reported it to the commandant (*Veld-Corner*), who instantly sent an armed party (*commando*) to his house. On the following day, being the 7th, there came twelve more of them, having three guns and three pack-oxen; all the rest were well armed with bows, arrows, and hassagays. The commandant Burger went himself to Jansen's in the morning to ask the reason of their coming there, when he discovered that eight of them were *Koranas* and seven Bosjesmans. Being asked by the party what they came to do, they said they were come to beg a little *dacha* (hemp) and tobacco. The commandant had the same answer, but he understood the way to question them so closely, that he brought them to open confession (by horrid tortures no doubt), that they came to examine how their farms (*plaatzen*) were to be attacked; and also to see if there was water enough to come with a great troop. Being asked

94. Theal, *Records*, Vol. XXXI, pp.17-18.

95. De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.276-278.

96. De Jongh, "Sendingwerk", pp.278-281; Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, p.105.

97. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.53-54.

who had sent them, they answered Truter⁹⁸ and the English missionary Kicherer, in order to spy the places, and return to the kraal where Kicherer and Truter would wait their return, to furnish them with musquets, powder and ball. On being asked how they were to execute it? they answered, by attacking the farm-houses by two and two at the same time, so that they could not assist one another. ALL THE FIFTEEN WE HAVE SHOT DEAD (*doodgeschooten*), HAVING FIRST EXTORTED THIS CONFESSION FROM THEM. The hat which Truter gave to the captain we have got; it is a black one with a silver band, and a cane with a brass head, on which is engraved "Captain Kauwinnoub".⁹⁹ Mark now with what murderous intentions is this Truter inspired against us! To have us all massacred in our houses!¹⁰⁰

This appalling episode, at the very least, reveals that popular opinion in the colony was capable of viewing Kicherer's mission with intense and irrational hostility. It is doubtful whether such misconceptions were restricted to the Sneeuwberg and in all likelihood many colonists were powerfully opposed to the mission, thereby contributing to its failure.

On a less extreme level of opposition, critical contemporaries, like Lichtenstein, cannot have been surprised by the mission's demise. "Such an institution bore in itself the germs of its downfall," he proclaimed in May 1805. "He [Kicherer] as well as Van der Kemp, seemed wholly to forget that mankind were destined to work as well as to pray."¹⁰¹ If, to the colonial mind, the Khoikhoi, "Bastaard-Hottentots" and "Bastaards" were so idle as to require prodding instead of prayers then the San were even more unlikely to become "civilised" by exposure to the gospel alone. Both Macartney and Barrow had known this and attempted to "impress them with a sense of the benefits arising from permanent property"; but they did not, however, appreciate the obstacles towards realising this goal. The San were not pastoralists and they did not come from societies which were culturally receptive to concepts such as private property or animal husbandry. Nor did they occupy a region either environmentally or politically suitable for the transition that was expected of them. The failure of the Sak River mission - and with it the failure of the 1798 peace proposals - was, with hindsight, pre-determined.

98. The Truter in question here is Petrus Johannes Truter, member of the Council of Justice and co-leader of the Truter-Somerville expedition to the Tswana in 1801. He was also Barrow's father-in law for Barrow had married Anna Maria Truter in 1799. It was, no doubt, from Truter himself that Barrow had obtained a copy of Meyer's letter. Truter's unpopularity with the frontier farmers probably stemmed from the fact that he had dismissed "eight or ten boors" who had accompanied the expedition "for their idle, disorderly, and thievish conduct". Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.57; Boucher and Penn, *Britain at the Cape*, p.97; Borchers, *Autobiographical Memoir*, p.40.

99. "Captain Kauwinnoub" might well have been the "Bushman captain, called Caricoup" who brought the Truter-Somerville expedition "a large piece of rock salt, and to him and a Kora chief named Ilapaim [Slaparm?] presents were made of two leather caps mounted with copper- plates, medallions, tobacco, &c.". Borchers, *Autobiographical Memoir*, p.70. See also n.39 above.

100. Barrow, *Travels*, Vol. 2, pp.54-55.

101. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p.230.

Perhaps the best contemporary analysis of the flaws in Macartney's proposals of 1798 is that which Colonel Collins wrote in 1809:

I cannot help thinking that his Lordship's plan for the civilisation and pacification of the Bosjeman nation, must have been formed on a total misconception of the character of that people. It was not to be expected that such multitudes of savages of the fiercest disposition, dispersed through such a vast extent of country, in no part of which they have a settled residence, and from which they plunder their neighbours in every direction, without the idea of any law, divine, or human, without any connection among themselves, except such as arises from the ties of parental or conjugal affection, and even without the least knowledge of the manner of cultivating corn, or rearing cattle, should at once become tractable, abandon their roving and predatory way of life, allow themselves to be confined between the Zak River and the Karee Mountains, acquire a knowledge of the art of agriculture or the precautions for preserving of permanent establishments and social intercourse, and consider themselves under the protection and authority of the British government.¹⁰²

The change of government at the Cape, in January 1806, came too late to save the mission. Indeed, it was the British Governor, Sir David Baird, who requested Kicherer to become minister at Graaff-Reinet. As we shall see in the next chapter, the new administration did not completely abandon the idea that mission stations, properly regulated, might play a vital role in stabilising the frontier and promoting peace between the *trekboers* and the San. But these proposed reforms should not mask the fact that, at the beginning of the second British occupation of the Cape, the colonists and the San were still at war with each other. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that in the years ahead the most promising missionary field lay amongst the Oorlam communities of the Orange River. The frontier, in effect, closed around the San of the northern Cape rather than sweeping over them and in the barren heart of Bushmanland the long, unequal battle to preserve their favoured lifestyle continued until late into the nineteenth century.

102. Moodie, *The Record*, Pt. V, p.35.

The Closing of the Northern Cape Frontier Zone

THE CALEDON CODE AND COLONEL COLLINS' REPORT

On 21 May 1807 the Cape Colony received its new governor, the twenty-nine year old Irish peer, Du Pre Alexander, Second Earl of Caledon.¹ Although his period of rule was to be of short duration (1807-1811) he was responsible for introducing an item of legislation which, in many respects, signalled the institutionalisation of the various processes of closure - social, political and economic - which, for some years, had been gathering momentum within the colony's frontier districts.

The proclamation of the Caledon Code (also known as the Hottentot Code or Hottentot Proclamation) on 1 November 1809 marks a crucial event in the colony's history.² The significance of the Code lies in the fact that it represents the first thorough attempt by the British, or indeed any government, to regulate relationships between the colonists and the Khoikhoi. Though the Khoikhoi were granted greater legal protection than they had previously had against the arbitrary cruelty of the colonial masters, in most other respects the Caledon Code served to confirm and entrench the *de facto* subjugation with *de jure* legislation.³ Article 1 of the Code stipulated that every Khoikhoi within the boundaries of the colony should have a fixed place of abode whose locality should be registered with the colonial authorities. Any Khoikhoi seeking to move from one locality to another had to be in possession of a valid pass, obtainable from either his or her master, or from the fiscal or local *landdrost*. Any colonist, on the other hand, who wished to employ a Khoikhoi labourer for a period in excess of a month had to appear, with the Khoikhoi, before a *landdrost*, *veldcornet* or the fiscal in order to complete a proper contract. The contract, which would be drafted in triplicate, would include the names of the contracting parties, the conditions of service, the details of the salary, the period of contract and any other pertinent details. Each of the contracting parties would then keep a copy of the contract whilst the official would retain the third copy. Article 6 of the Code made provision for those Khoikhoi who had

1. The best account of Caledon's governorship, though somewhat dated, is H.B. Giliomee, "Die Administrasietydperk Van Lord Caledon 1807-1811", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 29, Vol. 2, 1965.

2. The text of the Caledon Code is reproduced as an appendix in John Philip, *Researches in South Africa* (London, 1828), Vol. 2. See also G. M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol. VII, pp.211-16.

3. For a consideration of the conditions and involvement of Khoikhoi labourers in the economy of the eastern frontier districts on the eve of the Caledon Code see V.C. Malherbe, "Diversification And Mobility Of Khoikhoi Labour In The Eastern Districts Of The Cape Colony Prior To The Labour Law Of 1 November 1809", (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1978).

been mistreated to take their master before the Council of Justice or the Court of the *Heemraden* to face charges. If the master was found to be guilty as charged he could expect to be fined between ten and fifty Rijksdaalders or face further criminal charges before the Council of Justice. Other articles stipulated that any deductions made from a salary, such as for food or clothing, had to be brought before the notice of officials. Colonists could no longer withhold provisions from those of their labourers who became indebted to them, nor detain their labourers beyond the terms of their contract on the grounds of indebtedness. If a Khoikhoi labourer owed anything to his master at the end of the period of contract the master was to take the matter to court and not, in any circumstances, detain either the labourer or his wife and children. It was also stipulated that, in order for the regulations to become widely known, every *veldcornet* of every district should summons one Khoikhoi from each household to have the proclamation explained to him and thence to impart this knowledge to his fellows.⁴

These provisions represented an undoubted improvement in the conditions of service under which the Khoikhoi were employed. As such they reflect the humane and reformist intentions of the Caledon Code, intentions which were no less real for being linked with conditions which served to confirm the Khoikhoi's inferior status. Sympathetic observers were to hail the Caledon Code as the "Magna Charta of the Hottentots" which "rescued the Hottentots from a system of hardship and cruelty practised by the Boors which would in the course of a short time have extinguished that race."⁵ Even J.S. Marais concedes: "There is some justification for Theal's view that Caledon's law of 1809 saved the Hottentots from 'utter destruction'."⁶

We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that the most important consequence of the Caledon Code was, in the words of Dr. John Philip of the LMS, that: "The Hottentots are condemned to a perpetual state of servitude, nor have they the power, by any exertion, however great and praiseworthy, of liberating themselves from bondage".⁷ The implication of this legislation was that those Khoikhoi who were not in colonial service, or resident at mission stations, would not be granted a pass and would therefore be regarded as vagrant and subject to punishment. The Khoikhoi, in other words, were being forced by the British government to enter service.

4. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol. VII, pp.211-16.

5. W.W. Bird, *The State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822* (London, 1823), p.6.

6. Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, pp.121-2.

7. Philip, *Researches*, Vol. I, p.151.

The passing of such legislation (and that of 1812 which allowed for the compulsory "apprenticeship" of Khoikhoi children between the ages of eight and eighteen) was a clear departure from the policy of the first British occupation, where Khoikhoi had been regarded by the government as a free people who did not need to carry passes.⁸ The question therefore arises as to why the Earl of Caledon so unambiguously condemned the Khoikhoi to the status of unfree labourers. The Caledon Code has to be seen in the context of the colony as a whole. The challenge which faced the new (and alien) government was to effect a compromise between the diverse and conflicting interests of its subject population which did not, in turn, compromise the interests of the government itself. It was also necessary to take cognisance of British public opinion and the powerful parliamentary lobby of evangelists, abolitionists and humanitarians for no British government could afford to implement blatantly oppressive laws.⁹ Just as in the period of the first British occupation the watchwords were stability and economic progress. As far as the British were concerned the most dangerous threat to their rule was likely to emanate from the most powerful group within the colony - the white settlers. It was therefore more important to minimise settler grievances than to champion Khoikhoi liberties. It so happened that a major source of discontent amongst the colonists was the perception that there was a labour crisis in the colony - a crisis that had been exacerbated by Britain having abolished the slave trade throughout its possessions in 1807.¹⁰ Since a crisis in the labour supply threatened both political stability and economic progress simultaneously one of Caledon's most pressing tasks was to find a remedy to the problem. His solution was the Caledon Code.

Yet, as J.S. Marais observed over half a century ago: "It is easy to make too much of the connection between the abolition of the slave trade and the law of 1809 - as if the government's main motive was to substitute one species of forced labour for another. Hottentot labour did not suddenly become desirable in 1807. It had been desirable all along."¹¹ Indeed, the government was simply institutionalising and facilitating, albeit with some humanitarian restrictions, the established practice of binding Khoikhoi labourers to colonial masters. We should not, however, conclude that this represented a capitulation of state control. On the contrary. Those articles of

8. For a discussion of the legislation of 1809-1812 see Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, pp.121-131; R. Elphick and V.C. Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828", in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*, 2nd ed., pp.35-43; Giliomee, "Lord Caledon", pp.273-80. There is a need for more detailed case studies of the impact of the Caledon Code on the Khoikhoi in particular areas.

9. Amongst the large literature on the influence of the anti-slavery movement on British public opinion see the essays in James Walvin, *Slavery And British Society 1776-1846* (London, 1982).

10. On this point see S. Newton-King, "The labour market of the Cape Colony, 1807-1828", in Marks and Atmore, *Economy and Society*.

11. Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, p.122.

the Caledon Code which authorised the government to act against masters who might seek to abuse the terms of officially sanctioned labour contracts were themselves reminders that the state intended to keep the colonists on a much tighter rein. The Caledon Code therefore not only entrenched the rights of white farmers over Khoikhoi labourers but simultaneously advertised the power of the state over both. The exercise of this power was not, in the event, to be an empty threat. As far as the Khoikhoi were concerned the legislation did succeed in immobilising them in service, greatly reducing the "vagrancy" of which farmers had complained or, in the words of John Philip, "the whole Hottentot population are by this very proclamation placed in a state of the most wretched servitude, and entirely left at the disposal of the colonists".¹² On the other hand the Code also succeeded, in conjunction with the Circuit Courts instituted in 1811, in reducing the incidence of brutal abuse of Khoikhoi labourers by colonists. Though such abuses could not be completely eradicated the resentment which these laws of protection caused amongst frontier farmers (the Slagtersnek Rebellion of 1815 is the most dramatic example of this) is a clear indication that British power was felt to be real. In this sense, therefore, the Caledon Code marked a new experience for both Khoikhoi and colonists, a period in which the government at the Cape clearly demonstrated that it had both the will and the way to stamp its authority on its subjects, no matter how far away from Cape Town they might be. The political closure of the frontier zone was accelerating.

The Caledon Code was not the sole contribution which Caledon made to the closure of the Cape frontier. Nor was the relationship between the colonists and the Khoikhoi the only issue requiring clarification. In July 1807, only two months after his arrival at the Cape, Caledon received an alarming letter from Hendrik van der Graaf, *landdrost* of Tulbagh. The letter informed His Excellency that in the first four months of 1807 the San had stolen 818 sheep, 200 goats, 93 cattle and 20 horses from the Tulbagh district. Fourteen Khoikhoi and three whites had been killed by the San during the same period. Throughout the frontier districts, Van der Graaf explained, *veldcornets* were requesting ammunition and the right to mount full scale punitive commandos, chafing against government restrictions which stipulated that commandos needed permission from the governor before they could pursue the robbers.¹³

Although Caledon had only just arrived in the Cape he was not totally ignorant of the conflict between the colonists and the San. His response to Van der Graaf was to urge a policy of cautious restraint. In this he was no doubt guided by the precepts which had been laid down by

12. Philip, *Researches*, Vol. 1, p.149.

13. Giliomee, "Lord Caledon", p.263.

Macartney and Barrow during the first British occupation. Caledon reminded Van der Graaf that whereas the burghers had an undoubted right to exercise self defence they could not wage war against their enemies either indiscriminately or independently of state control. If the *landdrost* thought that the situation was serious enough to warrant it the government would send a detachment of troops to help keep the peace in his district.¹⁴

Van der Graaf, somewhat aggrieved at having been misunderstood, wrote back to explain that he was not contemplating massive, indiscriminate retaliation. The hostile San comprised but small groups amongst a majority of peaceful ones and limited commandos, well-equipped with ammunition, would take care of the problem.¹⁵ The governor, however, seems to have withheld both the official authorisation for a commando and the necessary supplies of gunpowder. It is likely that he had already decided to make a thorough investigation into the causes of the conflict between the colonists and the San before taking further action. Just as Macartney apprised himself of the situation in the Cape interior by despatching a trusted observer - Barrow - to tour the frontier districts, so too did Caledon appoint his own agent. The man in question was Colonel Richard Collins of the 83rd Regiment.

Collins set out on his journey, or series of journeys, in April 1808. In slightly more than a year his travels would take him from the northern to the north-eastern and eastern frontiers of the colony.¹⁶ His reports and recommendations were largely concerned with the nature of relationships which existed between colonists and the San on the one hand, and the colonists and the Xhosa on the other. There was, however, an important section of that part of his report which was tabled in August 1809 which presented recommendations for the treatment of the colonial Khoikhoi. It is remarkable how similar many of these recommendations are to the regulations of the Caledon Code of November 1809 and it is permissible to assume that Collins' advice was most closely followed by his noble superior.¹⁷ "I conceive that they all [the Khoikhoi] should be

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., pp.263-264.

16. Collins' reports are contained in Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, pp.1-60.

17. Philip had the following to say about the influences behind the Caledon Code: "All the enactments which emanated from the head and heart of Lord Caledon were characterized by wisdom and benevolence; but it is no reflection on his lordship to say that he might be deceived, when he was under the necessity of submitting to the judgement of others. The proclamation of 1809 was a case of this nature: the most important part of this proclamation was suggested to Colonel Collins, his Majesty's Commissioner, mentioned above, by an individual well known to have been deeply interested in oppressing the Hottentots. By Colonel Collins these suggestions were handed over to another gentleman, who claimed to himself, in my hearing, the whole merit of the proclamation, telling me that it was 'a child of his own'". Philip, *Researches*, Vol. 1, p.147. It is clear from other

sent to reside with the inhabitants, except such of them as are in the service of the government, or at the missionary or orphan institutions," wrote Collins.¹⁸ Further, "... but the measure which I conceive of the first importance to the protection of the Hottentot and the improvement of his situation is a sacred observance of his annual engagement".¹⁹ These, and other details, suggest that Collins exerted a powerful influence over Caledon's Khoikhoi policy. He was to exercise no less an influence over the governor's frontier policies and, like Barrow's report of 1798, Collins' report was to exert an influence over subsequent British policy makers for many years to come.

For the purposes of our enquiry it will be sufficient to consider those aspects of Collins' report which had a particular bearing on colonial relations with the San or on the northern Cape frontier zone in general. Collins first travelled to the Hantam and Roggeveld for it was in these districts that the robberies which Van der Graaf had reported, in July the previous year, had taken place. It would seem as though Collins had specific instructions to commence his investigations here although he was later to travel to the Agter Sneeu Berg with the same task in mind. Caledon had asked him to ascertain: "The extent of the misunderstanding which prevails between the farmers and the Bosjesmen; the probable cause, or causes, which have occasioned it; and the line of conduct best suited to remedy the evil."²⁰

With regards to the first issue Collins was able to report that, in general, throughout the frontier zone, relationships between colonists and San were better than he had been led to expect:

Whatever blame may be attributed to the colonists or to the original cause of this unfortunate misunderstanding that exists between them and the Bosjesmen, I observed nothing in them that indicated that implacable hatred which they are so generally supposed to feel for that people. They have frequent intercourse with some of their kraals, whose inhabitants often come to their habitations, and receive from them presents of sheep and tobacco. Many of them have Bosjesmen in their service, who they treat humanely, and who serve them faithfully.²¹

Collins proceeded to lament that Barrow had been guilty of spreading the most exaggerated accounts about the cruelty of the "African farmers". But there is a great deal of evidence, which Collins himself presented, which suggests that the peace policies initiated by Macartney had

information in Philip's book that the man who gave Collins his ideas was J.G. Cuyler, the *landdrost* of Uitenhage, and a great foe of the missionaries. Philip, *Researches*, Vol. 1, pp.124-7.

18. Collins, in Moodie, *The Record*, Part V, p.21.

19. Ibid., p.22.

20. Ibid., p.33.

21. Ibid., p.34.

indeed lowered the levels of frontier conflict in the decade since 1798. Wherever farmers had been able to establish a personal relationship with a group of San, and won their friendship with a donation of gifts of livestock or tobacco, peace seemed to prevail. Those guilty of robbing farmers were usually groups from far beyond the colonial frontier who had not, through constant contact with the colonists, been able to establish such a relationship. Alternatively, there were instances where groups of frontier San had spared their immediate neighbours but raided deep within the colony to rob more distant strangers. Collins ascribed such robberies not to "any particular animosity to the colonists" but to want and custom.²² The fact that the San had found that they could procure articles of subsistence by plundering the farmers was, in Collins' opinion, reason enough for them to do so. It was essential, therefore, that they continue to be convinced that their robberies and attacks would be punished and repelled.

It was for this reason that Collins was not in favour of continuing the practice of giving gifts of livestock to the San, despite evidence that the policy of buying peace had had some success. It was his opinion that: "It tends to make them suppose that the colonists fear them; and besides, it would be impossible to supply all their nation with a sufficient number for its consumption, even were they careful of them, which they are not; and by giving them to those on the borders, such as are more distant are induced to come nearer, and consequently increase the evil".²³ For Collins the only measures that might put an end to the "depredations of the Bosjesmen" were those which would be directed to the root of the evil; "and that before any reliance can be placed on them, a change must be effected in their habits and manners, which can only be the work of time, aided by the zealous and indefatigable exertions of some intelligent individuals, supported and encouraged by the bounty and guardian care of a beneficent government".²⁴

The key, in short, to the pacification of the colony's northern frontier was the establishment of well-regulated mission stations. In the course of his travels Collins had visited Van der Kemp and his mission at Bethelsdorp as well as the Moravians at Baviaanskloof. The latter institution was the one which had most impressed him though he had also heard very good reports of Anderson's mission on the other side of the Orange River. Most surprisingly Collins seems to have gained a favourable impression of Kicherer's efforts at the Sak River and stated that "the happiest effects were felt during the continuance of his institution, which was abandoned from no cause but

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p.37.

24. Ibid., p.35.

pecuniary difficulties".²⁵ Collins' suggestion was that more missions should be established and that they should, in addition to their missionary staff, be superintended by "a couple of the most respectable and intelligent inhabitants of the division" who, in turn, would be subject to inspection and report by the *landdrosts*.²⁶ To Collins' eyes the northern frontier zone seemed to "admit of three divisions": the first included the Kamiesberg, the Onder Bokkeveld, the Hantam and the Roggeveld; the second included the Nieuweveld and the Koup; and the third included the Renosterberg, Sneeuwweg and the Tarka.²⁷ Collins proposed that each of these divisions should have a mission station and made suggestions as to where these should be established and which of the locals would be best suited for closer involvement in this scheme. In the Hantam-Roggeveld district the old Sak River site was proposed, or, failing that, the Bloem or Ratel Fontein, one or two days to the east and enjoying better pasturage. It was here that Kruger had been granted temporary residence by Kicherer on account of his "friendly disposition towards the Bosjesmen" and the circumstances therefore seemed most promising.²⁸ In the Tarka Collins recommended a spot near a place called Schaap Kraal and in the Koup a farm called Slange Fontein, one of the sources of the Sak River. A further suggestion was that of Groot Fontein, close to the Orange River and to the west of the Seekoei River. As Collins remarked, in words which unconsciously paid tribute to the efficacy of the Macartney reforms: "This part of the colony, altogether the most distant from the capital, is in a more improving state than any that I visited. The tracts stated in Mr. Barrow's charts to have been deserted on account of the Bosjesmen Hottentots, are now entirely filled up, and the country is inhabited as far as the limits".²⁹ Whether this was an improvement from the perspective of the San was, of course, debatable, but the significant thing about these colonial advances was that they had been achieved under the protection of goodwill rather than by the agency of the commandos.

In Collins' opinion, however, such goodwill, purchased by the frontier farmers through gifts of slaughtered game, sheep, tobacco, dagga, knives and tinderboxes, was too fragile a basis for enduring peace. Not only was this means of conciliation costly (whether the costs were to be borne by the government, missionaries, frontier farmers or the inhabitants of the colony as a whole) but, as Collins had already noted, it could be misconstrued as a sign of weakness. It would be far better to convince the San that these gifts were rewards for services rendered and that in future they would only be obtainable from the mission stations. The gifts were, in fact, to be

25. *Ibid.*, p.23.

26. *Ibid.*, p.36.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, p.23.

29. *Ibid.*, pp.23-4.

regarded as commodities which could be exchanged at the mission stations for items which the San might be able to deliver, such as skins, mats, ostrich feathers or ivory. The San could also be taught "mechanical arts" at the missions and later be encouraged to work as labourers in the colony so that they could acquire further commodities. The process of transforming San societies into wage earning consumers would no doubt be a long one but Collins urged that the problem be given immediate attention. If it was not addressed with some urgency the colonists would grow tired of paying for their safety and the San would return to the mountains to recommence "their former predatory mode of life".³⁰

In the meantime, Collins concluded, the colonists should be granted sufficient ammunition to enable them to repel any attacks from unpacified San up to the limits of the colony. Beyond this point, however, they should not be able to proceed without permission from a source of authority which, in future, might well be vested in the superintendent of the mission stations.

Collins' report on the northern frontier zone thus conveyed to the governor the impression that the best way to advance the cause of an enduring peace would be to encourage the establishment of state-supervised mission stations which would see their task as being the transformation of the San into useful wage labourers. The mission stations would therefore play, essentially, the same role for the San as pass regulations would play for the Khoikhoi, that is they would direct vagrant souls into service acceptable to the state. It is clear that whilst Collins was in favour of missions to the San on the northern frontier he was not in favour of missions to the Khoikhoi on the eastern frontier.³¹ He became a bitter critic of LMS efforts to attract Khoikhoi adherents to the mission stations, obviously regarding the Khoikhoi as sufficiently civilised to play their part as labourers on colonial farms and perceiving their presence at mission stations as an indulgence in provocative idleness.³²

30. Ibid., p.24.

31. Philip's remarks on these proposals are perceptive. "This officer's zeal for missions among the Bushmen, and the abolition of those in the colony, proceeds from the same principle, namely, what he conceives would be for the benefit of the farmers. The only reason he assigns for opposing missions within the limits is, that he thinks it better for the farmers that the hottentots should be among them, than that they should be at an institution; and he actually proposes that the Bushmen, after being civilised at our institutions, should be distributed among the farmers in a similar manner." *Researches*, Vol. 2, p.19.

32. Philip stated that Collins wished to abolish Bethelsdorp and disperse its people among the farmers, but that Caledon and Cradock "had too much integrity of character, and too much benevolence to allow them to listen to such a proposition". *Researches*, Vol. 1, p.xix.

This official suspicion of any missionary endeavour which was aimed at the Khoikhoi and based within the colony was something which the government had learnt from the colonists and was to sour relations between the government and the LMS for many years. It was also to affect the implementation of Collins' scheme, for it was not to be expected that missionaries would wholeheartedly participate in a government sponsored campaign of proselytisation amongst the San of the northern frontier zone when they were being obstructed in their ministries to the more tractable Khoikhoi within the colony itself. But there were other reasons why Collins' suggestions were not acted upon immediately. In the first place, Caledon's period of rule at the Cape was a short one. He resigned in July 1811 after a lengthy quarrel with Westminister and his military chief of staff, Major-General George Grey, as to who was in full command of the British armed forces in the colony.³³ In the second place, Caledon's governorship had been preoccupied with the problems of the eastern frontier where the major decision was whether or not to expel the Xhosa from the Zuurveld and thereby involve the colony in war. In the event, Caledon's successor, Sir John Cradock, made the fateful decision to launch the Fourth Frontier War shortly after Caledon's departure.³⁴ In the third place, before empowering missionaries to establish mission stations in the frontier districts, Caledon had to take cognisance of the opinions of the colonists themselves and, on the whole, they were extremely hostile to the presence of missionaries amongst them. Finally, the desires of the missionaries themselves had to be considered. The LMS had not forgotten that the clearest lesson to emerge from the Sak River Mission had been that whereas Khoikhoi, "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" were most receptive to the Christian gospel, the San represented one of the least rewarding fields of missionary endeavour in which to labour.

The last two of these reasons - colonial hostility and missionary preferences - will require further elaboration if we are to understand why Collins' suggestions were not immediately implemented.³⁵ Further unsuccessful attempts to establish a mission to the San were, in fact, made by the LMS in 1814 at Toornberg (present Colesberg) and in 1816 in Hephziba (present Petrusville). By 1818 both had failed due to the opposition of the governor, Lord Charles Somerset; the hostility of local white farmers and divisions within the missionary society itself.³⁶ As far as the northern frontier was concerned the "Bastaards" and "Bastaard-Hottentots" of the

33. Gilimoe, "Lord Caledon", pp.227-36.

34. See B. MacLennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror* (Johannesburg, 1985) for an account of the Fourth Frontier War.

35. See pp.474-84 below.

36. See Karel Schoeman, "Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stasies Toornberg en Hephzibah, 1814-1818", *South African Historical Journal*, 28, 1993, pp.221-234.

north-west and Transorania remained the most promising missionary target. But despite the failure of Collins' proposals his report had indicated that processes of closure were already far advanced within the colony's northern frontier districts by 1809. Indeed, Collins' report was in itself an indication that state surveillance was on the increase and that the government was in the process of establishing a much greater degree of political control over the frontier zone - with or without missionary agents - than it had ever previously enjoyed. This fact is brought home by the sequel to the Collins' Report - a second official tour to the frontier districts of the northern Cape in 1809.

VAN DER GRAAF'S TOUR

In May 1809 Hendrik van der Graaf, the *landdrost* of Tulbagh, wrote to Lord Caledon to inform him of a proposed expedition to the northern borders of the colony.³⁷ Van der Graaf had been appointed as first *landdrost* of the new district of Tulbagh, proclaimed by the Batavian government in October 1804. He retained his post after the British conquest of 1806 and served under the incoming administration.³⁸ Of an energetic and enquiring disposition he had already demonstrated his belief in acquiring knowledge at first hand when, together with Lichtenstein, he had travelled northwards to visit the Tswana in 1805.³⁹ During the course of this journey he had visited the Sak River mission and attempted to reinforce the precarious state of peace which existed between the colonists and the San of the northern frontier.⁴⁰ By 1809, however, continuous reports of conflict and upheaval from the outlying regions of his area of administration convinced him of the need to undertake another personal tour of inspection to some of the district's most troublesome areas.

Van der Graaf explained that he wished to investigate the nature of the frontier colonists, their means of support, the state of their farms, the extent of their trade and their relationships with other groups, particularly Khoikhoi and other "rodzwervende volken". The district of Klein Namaqualand, which the *landdrost* had never previously visited, seemed to him to be particularly troubled by discord and division ("oneenigheeden") between Khoikhoi and colonists. For this reason alone he was anxious to journey to the most northerly regions of the colony. There were, however, other good reasons to visit the frontier districts. The *drostdy* was being inundated by an

37. CA, Archives of the Magistrate, Worcester (hereafter 1/WOC) 17/2, Uitgaande Brieven 1808-1809, Landdrost to Governor, 23 May 1809.

38. CA, Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate, Worcester 2/7.

39. See Lichtenstein, *Travels*, Vol. 2.

40. See pp.451-56 above.

increasing number of requests and complaints concerning disputes over land and farms. Furthermore, many people were occupying government land and farming it without having taken out the ground on loan or paying the due rental for it. The *landdrost* was therefore confident that a government tour of inspection would be a highly desirable and necessary measure.⁴¹

All of these concerns indicate that Van der Graaf, as a good administrator, was anxious to bring processes of political closure to bear on the northern frontiers of his district. It is also obvious that the economic and social closure of the frontier was manifesting itself in the increasing number of land disputes and in the discord which existed between the Khoikhoi and the colonists. But Van der Graaf was also aware of the fact that Colonel Collins had been touring his district with a view to advising the governor on how best to administer it. The *landdrost*'s request to make his own tour of inspection may well have been an attempt to remind Caledon that the opinion of local officials should also be consulted and might, in fact, prove to be superior to that of an outsider. Van der Graaf had already had occasion to feel somewhat slighted by the governor, namely, when Caledon had responded so coolly to his requests for permission to unleash well-armed commandos against the troublesome San. He was probably as concerned with impressing Caledon with his initiative as he was with correcting some of the impressions which he feared Collins may have conveyed to the governor. He cannot have had unconditional confidence in Collins' report and was keen to stamp his authority on the northern Cape whilst providing Caledon with alternative suggestions for effective government.

Caledon's enthusiastic response to Van der Graaf's proposal must have taken the *landdrost* by surprise. On 5 August 1809 the Secretary's office wrote to assure Van der Graaf that the governor was "well aware of the anxiety which you feel, for the welfare of the Colony at large and for the particular interests in your Drostdy ... and has directed me to request Your minute attention to those parts of the Country through which you shall travel".⁴² Caledon was, in fact, delighted to think that he might benefit from a more detailed investigation into the issues which Collins' report had raised. It is clear from his instructions to Van der Graaf that he regarded the forthcoming trip as a chance to supplement Collins' report, ordering the *landdrost* to pay particular attention to the question of the influence which missionaries might have in securing peace with the San. Van der Graaf was to comment on the best way to regulate mission stations and suggest which of the places mentioned by Collins would be most suitable for the

41. CA, I/WOC 17/2, Landdrost to Governor, 23 May 1809.

42. CA, I/WOC 11/1, Inkomende Briewe van Koloniale Kantoer, June 1805-Dec. 1809, Secretary's Office to Landdrost, 5 August 1809.

establishment of such a mission station. The *landdrost* was, further, to investigate whether the San could be encouraged to produce useful items, such as *biltong*, which could be given to the frontier farmers in exchange for the "acts of Humanity" which they were, at present, receiving for nothing.⁴³

In these, as in other details, Caledon clearly revealed that he envisaged Van der Graaf's proposed expedition as a follow up to Collins' report. *Landdrost* van der Graaf, however, had very different ideas about his mission and the journal of his trip to Namaqualand reveals that he pursued a quite independent line of enquiry.⁴⁴ A close inspection of this journal suggests that the *landdrost* was far more interested in asserting governmental authority over the colonists than he was in reforming the San. It is also clear that Van der Graaf shared in the typical colonial antipathy towards missionaries and that, far from promoting Caledon's vision of establishing missionary institutions as a means of civilising the San, he did his best to remove a missionary presence from the colony altogether.⁴⁵

Van der Graaf's expedition left the Tulbagh *drostdy* on 10 August 1809 and travelled to the Roggeveld via the Warm Bokkeveld, Karooport and the Tanqua Karoo. From the Roggeveld Van der Graaf went westwards, over the Pakhuis pass, to the Olifants River. The expedition then proceeded northwards, to the Kamiesberg and beyond, becoming only the second group of record-leaving colonists to visit the mouth of the Orange River. After this event, achieved on 12 September, the expedition returned, via the Olifants River, to Tulbagh, which it reached at the beginning of October. During the course of this journey a member of the *landdrost's* party kept a journal which recorded, in unprecedented detail, the state of affairs existing in the normally obscure northern districts of the colony.⁴⁶ The recorded details are of inestimable value in that they illuminate the major processes of closure which were taking place within the frontier zone at this crucial date in the colony's history: the eve of the introduction of the Caledon Code. It may be supposed that many of Van der Graaf's observations confirmed Caledon in his decision to

43. Ibid.

44. The Journal is both undated and unsigned but the contextual evidence of the letters cited above allows us to identify its provenance and date with some accuracy. Van der Graaf was not himself the writer of the Journal and it is possible that it was kept by his secretary, Johannes Henricus Fischer. The Journal has no year date but it is obviously a record of the 1809 expedition to the north. It is to be found in CA Miscellaneous (hereafter M) 76, Journey to Namaqualand.

45. Van der Graaf's views on mission stations are already present in his remarks on the Sak River mission which he visited with Lichtenstein in 1805. See pp.450 above.

46. See note 44 above for speculation as to the identity of the journal's author.

implement his Khoikhoi labour legislation whilst, at the same time, delaying the implementation of mission stations for the San.

The value of Van der Graaf's report is also enhanced by the fact that it is the work of a well-informed colonist rather than (as is most often the case with travellers' accounts of the Cape interior in the eighteenth or nineteenth century) that of a visiting European observer. This does not, of course, make its observations or interests either more or less biased, but it does mean that the prejudices and preoccupations of the journalist reflect a colonial consciousness and thus provide us with a uniquely privileged glimpse into how members of the "Afrikaner" elite viewed the exercise of colonial power at this time.

During the course of Van der Graaf's procession through the north-western frontier regions he had frequent occasion to listen to the complaints of both Khoikhoi labourers and their masters concerning each other. It is clear that Khoikhoi were still having their wages withheld from them and their freedom of movement restricted. It is also clear that the white colonists believed there to be a great shortage of labour, due to the impossibility of acquiring slaves and the desertion of Khoikhoi labourers to the mission stations. In the Roggeveld Gerrit Visser asked for stricter government controls to be introduced so as to enforce colonial Khoikhoi, and those "overvloedige" (overflowing) numbers residing at mission stations, to work for the farmers.⁴⁷

Mission stations that served the needs of the Khoikhoi were thus perceived, by the colonists, as interfering with their labour supply. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Kamiesberg where the efforts of Johannes Seidenfaden to establish a mission in Little Namaqualand met with determined resistance from the white settlers. Seidenfaden was one of the six missionaries (the Albrecht brothers were amongst the others) who had arrived in South Africa with Kicherer when he returned in 1805. Seidenfaden and the Albrechts had been prohibited from establishing a mission within the colony (and the Kamiesberg was declared to fall within the colony) by the Batavian government and had been compelled to journey beyond the colony's northern boundary in order to preach the gospel.⁴⁸ There they established a temporary mission at Stille Hoop, the junction of the Orange and Hartebest Rivers, and in 1807, the station of Warm Bad in Great Namaqualand.⁴⁹ By 1809, however, Seidenfaden was back in the Kamiesberg where, with

47. CA M 76, 16 Aug. [1809].

48. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.112-15.

49. See pp.480-1 below.

Cornelius Kok's encouragement, he sought to commence a mission amongst the Little Namaqua. He soon encountered difficulties.

When Van der Graaf arrived in the Kamiesberg, in September 1809, Christiaan Albrecht, as well as Seidenfaden, were present. Albrecht was on a visit from Warm Bad and the colonists did not seem to have many complaints about him. They particularly disliked Seidenfaden, however, and were convinced that he had been inciting the local Namaqua to disobedience and robbery. Seidenfaden himself, it was argued, was engaged in cattle trading in Great Namaqualand and was using the Kamiesberg as a convenient place to pasture his herds. This inconvenienced local farmers but it also inconvenienced the Little Namaqua whose farms, Leliefontein and Langeklip, were the centre of the mission. These farms had been granted by Governor Tulbagh and the colonists claimed, piously, that Seidenfaden was attempting to dispossess the Namaqua of Chief Wildschut of their land. Seidenfaden's teaching only extended to the Khoikhoi and "Bastaards", many of whom had previously lived amongst the "Christenen" but who were now congregating at the mission station filled with pride and antagonism. Seidenfaden himself had threatened Petrus van der Heever with a beating, to be delivered by some of his followers, when Van der Heever had tried to remove the missionary and his livestock from his farm. The *landdrost* was greatly concerned that even more Khoikhoi and "Bastaards", the missionaries' converts from the Orange River, would flock to Leliefontein, causing a grave security problem for the colonists. It was, furthermore, alleged that Seidenfaden had abrogated to himself the right to open and intercept government letters.⁵⁰

Called to account by Van der Graaf, Seidenfaden explained that he had left the Orange River because the heat was affecting his health. It was also impossible to grow wheat or establish a settled community in the harsh environment beyond the limits of the colony. He had thus journeyed southwards to the Buffels River and there accepted an invitation from the Khoikhoi captain, Links, to go to the Kamiesberg. He was certainly not appropriating Khoikhoi land since he was there at their request. He also had the support of Sebastiaan and Cornelius Kok. He had never threatened Petrus Van den Heever although the latter had tried to prevent him from crossing his farm with a wagon load of wheat from Sebastiaan Kok. The only cattle the missionaries had were cattle that belonged to their followers or were necessary for the support of the community. Nor was it true that he had claimed governmental powers for himself.⁵¹

50. CA M 76, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Sept.[1809].

51. Ibid.

Van der Graaf was not impressed by these denials and was able to convince Captain Wildschut to state that he had never been consulted in the decision to allow missionaries to establish a mission at Liliesfontein. The decision had been Captain Links' alone.⁵² It is possible that there was a power struggle taking place amongst the Namaqua revolving around Cupido Links, Jantje Wildschut's uncle, and Jantje Wildschut himself.⁵³ Links and the Koks were probably seen as being of the missionary party whilst Wildschut was seen as being more easily dominated by the white colonists. The earlier Chief Wildschut, of Governor Tulbagh's day, had recently died and the present Chief Wildschut, Jantje Wildschut, had only been confirmed in office on 9 May 1809.⁵⁴

Van der Graaf insisted that the missionaries removed themselves from the Kamiesberg and confined their activities to situations beyond the limits of the colony, for which Christiaan Albrechts had already petitioned the government. The government would be quite happy to grant the requisite farms outside the colony (in fact Van der Graaf brought news of this confirmation) but would not permit the establishment of a missionary institution within the middle of an area of colonial settlement or one which was at the expense of the Khoikhoi. When Van der Graaf conveyed this judgement to Caledon the governor was somewhat surprised at his *landdrost's* interpretation of the law. Van der Graaf was claiming that no missions, apart from those already in existence, were permitted inside the colony, whereas Caledon, who wished to establish new missions to the San, did not believe this prohibition to be in effect. He was happy to concede that Seidenfaden should not be allowed to establish a mission in the Kamiesberg but added that "since much public advantage might derive from missions please point out to Seidenfaden another place, either within or without the colony, for a mission".⁵⁵

Van der Graaf was quick to defend his actions, claiming that he had supposed the law of 20 February 1805 still to be in operation, a law which stated that missionaries should establish their institutions outside the boundaries of the colony. This excuse was rather lame coming from one whose task was to ascertain whether the establishment of new mission stations would help to promote peace within the colony, and could not mask the fact that, like many of the colonists, he was deeply suspicious of missions to the colonial Khoikhoi. What would the effect be, he asked, if Seidenfaden's 400 Khoikhoi from the Orange River followed him into the colony?⁵⁶

52. Ibid., 4 Sept. [1809].

53. Ibid., 20 Sept. [1809].

54. CA, 1/WOC 17/2, Landdrost to Governor, 9 May 1809.

55. CA 1/WOC 11/1, Secretary's Office to Landdrost, 31 Oct. 1809.

56. CA 1/WOC 17/2, Landdrost to Governor, 10 Nov. 1809.

It cannot be said, however, that his enthusiasm for missions to the San was any stronger or, if it was, he certainly failed to support this suggestion with any favourable evidence. Those colonists whom he canvassed on the subject regarded missions to the San as a waste of time. In the Roggeveld, Abraham Botma, whose brother, Christiaan, had worked as a missionary, declared that he thought the San to be beyond the reach of instruction and that missionaries would be far better employed preaching to the "Bastaard-Hottentots" who could at least tell right from wrong.⁵⁷

Van der Graaf's report was not, therefore, one from which Caledon could draw much support for Collins' scheme of converting the San. In other respects, however, the two reports were very similar. Both men regarded missions to the Khoikhoi as undesirable and both suggested greater control over Khoikhoi labourers. Despite Van der Graaf's typically colonial views he seems to have secured the land rights of at least one small group of Khoikhoi. His report mentioned that there was a small kraal of Khoikhoi, under a Captain Louis, at Doornkraal near the mouth of the Olifants River, whose land was likely to fall victim to the rival land claims of some local farmers. Van der Graaf succeeded in confirming the Khoikhoi in their property upon his return.⁵⁸ He mentioned another Khoikhoi kraal, at Klipheuwel on the Olifants River, but it was clear that there were very few independent Khoikhoi kraals left within the colony and those that there were were under threat from land-hungry colonists.⁵⁹

Even "Bastaard" land holders like Cornelius Kok were under threat by 1809 and it is clear that the Koks' days in the Kamiesberg were numbered. Van der Graaf records that Kok had bought two Kamiesberg farms, or the *opstals* on them, for 400 Rijksdaalders from *Veldcornet* Nicukerk. It then transpired that the farms, "Groote Valley" and "Een Riet" had never been properly registered and could thus not be transferred. Nicukerk, meanwhile, had spent the money. Though Kok was led to expect repayment with interest it was probably no coincidence that his attempt to acquire legal title to colonial land had come to naught.⁶⁰ One wonders whether white farmers experienced similar difficulties when they attempted to register the equally vague loan-farm

57. CA M 76, 15 Aug. [1809].

58. CA M 76, 25 Aug. [1809]; CA 1/WOC 17/2, Landdrost to Governor, 21 Oct. 1809.

59. CA M 76, 26 Sept. [1809]. There is an interesting reference to a "very industrious Hottentot" at the Piketberg by the name of Lucas who, in about 1801, had produced 80 muids of wheat. The authorities wished to know whether there were any other such Khoikhoi - an indication that they were most uncommon. CA 1/WOC 11/1, Secretary's Office to Landdrost, 5 Aug. 1809.

60. Ibid., 1 Sept. [1809].

claims which they had acquired from other white farmers. The indications are that the Koks were being squeezed out of the colony, their old usefulness as allies forgotten.

The frontier was closing rapidly with widespread land hunger in the north and a deterioration in the status of Khoikhoi and "Bastaards" alike. Van der Graaf proposed that the Orange River should be declared the colony's northern boundary since the colonists were hard pressed to survive within their present limits and would not disadvantage anyone by extending their domain.⁶¹ This suggestion was not acted upon but, truth to tell, the river was already the unofficial frontier of the colony. After the proclamation of the Caledon Code more and more colonial Khoikhoi joined the "Bastaards", and "Bastaard-Hottentots" of the Orange River's Oorlam groups.⁶² The fact that missionaries were allowed to instruct such groups was an even greater incentive to go northwards.

OORLAMIS AND MISSIONARIES AT THE ORANGE RIVER, 1805-1815

Missionary influence on the Oorlam societies of the Orange River prior to 1805 was considerable and has already received some consideration.⁶³ By this date even the Afrikaner gang had recognised that the key to their continued existence depended on establishing close connections with the missionaries since without such contacts they would suffer both spiritual and material disadvantages relative to other Oorlam groups. Thus, in October 1805, as the Albrecht brothers and Seidenfaden made their way northwards to commence their mission at the Orange River they reported that they had met with the Afrikaner gang and that the latter were "desirous to be taught the way of salvation".⁶⁴ As well as feeling the need for a missionary, the Afrikaners were also seriously attempting to improve their relationship with the colonial authorities. They had been obliged to shift the base of their operations from the Middle Orange to Great Namaqualand. After their unpleasant experience at the hands of the Koks and Barends, the Afrikaners were no longer powerful enough to contest the supremacy of the river to the east of the Augrabies falls, particularly since the rival Oorlam groups were now fortified by colonial assistance - thanks to the missionaries. It is doubtful whether this loss of supremacy of the Middle Orange River was

61. Ibid., 7 Sept. [1809].

62. Although there were already significant numbers of Oorlams north of the river before 1809 it is quite clear that Oorlam migration from the colony increased after that date. When LMS missionary Schmelen arrived in Klipfontein (or Bethany) in southern Namibia in 1814 he took with him 120 Oorlams from the Komagas district. Kobus Booï (see pp.379-80 above) had been there since about 1804. Other Oorlam groups began to emerge between c.1810-1840. See B. Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time*, pp.19-40.

63. See pp.435-442 above.

64. See p.441 above.

accompanied by a lack of access to the southern Tswana. The evidence suggests that about this time (1805) the Afrikaners raided the Tlhaping and were involved in firearms trade to the Tlharo near the Langeberg.⁶⁵ But whatever the nature of the Afrikaners' involvement in Transorania, they were now forced to develop trading links with the Cape colony to the west of Bushmanland. It was for this reason that they welcomed the arrival of missionaries in Great Namaqualand and allowed them to establish mission stations in the territory at the beginning of 1806.

By this date it was apparent that the missionary presence at the Orange River was so influential as to signify the dawning of a new era for the societies of the region. This was particularly true of the Middle Orange River. When Kicherer left the Orange River in March 1802 Anderson and Kramer had remained behind and continued to minister to a growing community.⁶⁶ The large numbers of people (which averaged 784 souls in 1809) with their livestock (more than 3 000 cattle with even more sheep and goats and 80 to 90 horses)⁶⁷ proved, as Somerville had feared,⁶⁸ to be too much for the natural resources of the area and the settlement was obliged to move from Rietfontein (or Aakaap) to the Kloof and, finally to Klaarwater.⁶⁹ Here the extended families of the Koks and the Barends united, retaining however, the separate identities under their respective leaders, Adam Kok and Barend Barends. Adam Kok, was reckoned the richest man among them and possessed a thousand sheep, eight hundred goats and three teams of oxen, besides a number of cows and calves.⁷⁰ If danger threatened the combined groups could, by 1811, call on a formidable force of more than two hundred men armed with muskets. The necessary military strength and political authority to protect the economic base of this nascent statelet - the future Griquatown, capital of the Griqua (as its inhabitants were encouraged to call themselves, by John Campbell, after 1813)⁷¹ - was thus in existence.

In addition to the extensive flocks and herds of the community crops were planted at a number of springs in the vicinity whilst, after 1805, houses began to be built out of stone. The other

65. Legassick, "The Griqua, Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries", pp.257 and 260.

66. See p.442 above.

67. Burchell, *Travels*, pp.253-4.

68. E. and F. Bradlow, (eds.), *Somerville*, pp.99-100.

69. At the time they took possession of Klaarwater it was a San kraal. Burchell, *Travels*, p.252.

70. Burchell, *Travels*, p.254.

71. Campbell, *Travels*, p.252. "The people in this part, being a mixed race, went by the name of Bastards; but having represented to the principal persons the offensiveness of the word to an English or Dutch ear, they resolved to assume some other name. On consulting among themselves, they found the majority were descended from a person of the name of Griqua, and they resolved hereafter to be called Griquas."

economic activities which underpinned the society were trading, and, despite the new Christian faith of some members, raiding.

The former activity dealt principally with ivory and cattle, traded from the Tlhaping and Rolong. So important was this trade that it quickly became institutionalised and played a large part in stabilising relationships between the "Bastaards" and the Tswana. As Legassick points out, the Tswana were less easily raided than the Khoisan communities whilst they also enjoyed closer access to the diminishing and retreating herds of elephant.⁷² It was not only "Bastaards" who grasped the opportunities offered by the trade with the Tswana but some of the missionaries too.

The participation of missionaries in this trade undoubtedly facilitated "Bastaard" access to the colonial market and the acquisition of guns and gunpowder. Missionary agents were clearly preferable to frontier farmers because, in the eyes of both the government and the "Bastaards", they were perceived to be trustworthy individuals about legitimate business. Both Jan Matthys Kok and William Edwards, out of necessity, became ivory traders for there was no other means to support themselves far beyond the reach of supplies and assistance during their mission to the Tswana. Kok played a most energetic role in trading ivory from the Tlhaping and Baralong. The latter group offered the favourable exchange rate of one tusk per sheep, which enabled Kok to send wagon loads of ivory to the south. It is estimated that by 1806 Kok had made 3 000 Rijksdaalders from the ivory trade and Edwards 3 200 Rijksdaalders, a sum which enabled him to buy a wine farm near Tulbagh and abandon the hardships of the missionary calling. In 1807 William Anderson discovered that he could obtain 269 Rijksdaalders worth of ivory for only 20 Rijksdaalders worth of beads.⁷³ Such commerce was not without danger. In 1805 one of Kok's wagons was attacked by San and the Khoikhoi guards killed. In November 1806 Kok himself was murdered by two Tlhaping men who were clearly motivated by greed rather than hostility to the Christian message.⁷⁴

The advantages (and disadvantages) of missionary involvement in linking the "Bastaards" to the Cape trading network are well-illustrated by the case of Jager Afrikaner and the LMS missionary, Seidenfaden, at Pella in 1810. Seidenfaden and the Albrechts had established a mission at the Orange River near Louis Fontein/Stille Hoop (present day Kakamas) in January 1805. Shortly

72. Legassick, "The Northern Frontier", in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), *Shaping*, 2nd ed., p.371.

73. Legassick, "The Griqua, Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries", pp.235-6; Legassick, "The Northern Frontier", in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), *Shaping*, 2nd ed., pp.371-72.

74. Du Bruyn, "Sending Onder die Tlhaping", pp.38-41.

after this they explored the possibility of commencing a mission in Great Namaqualand (or southern Namibia) and by 1807 had founded the Warm Bad station in this harsh environment.⁷⁵ The decision to begin mission activities in Great Namaqualand had, significantly, come from Cornelius Kok, who retained extensive interests in both Little and Great Namaqualand as well as the Middle Orange.⁷⁶ The missionaries, Abraham and Christiaan Albrecht, based themselves at Warm Bad whilst Johannes Seidenfaden moved to Heirachabis, eighty kilometres east of present day Karasberg. Even before this, however, they had been obliged to come to terms with Jager Afrikaner. He, for his part, seemed to welcome their presence, sending his children to the mission school.⁷⁷ Afrikaner was not the only presence in the area, for it was inhabited by other Oorlam, Nama and refugee Einiqua groups. At Heirachabis were the !Kharakhoen (Fransmanne)⁷⁸ and at Warm Bad the Gaminus or (Bondelswarts)⁷⁹ who were in conflict with the Ogeis (Groot Doode).⁸⁰ All of these groups were Great Namaqua. The captain of the Bondelswarts sought to use the missionaries, their following and their firearms (actual or anticipated) against the Groot Doode whilst there was considerable conflict between the Nama and the Oorlams.⁸¹ The missionaries had, somehow, to keep the peace between these mutually antagonistic groups at Warm Bad whilst propagating the gospel.⁸² By 1807, despite these political challenges, they presided over a community of 300 Bondelswarts, 200 Oorlams and some Einiqua.⁸³ The station at Heirachabis was, however, abandoned due to its unrewarding ecological environment and Seidenfaden attempted to move within the boundaries of the colony to establish a mission in the Kamiesberg. The ill-fate of this venture has already been discussed and, following his eviction from Leliefontein, Seidenfaden settled at Pella, just south of the Orange River, in October 1809.

It was here that Seidenfaden began to play much the same role to the Afrikaners as Edwards had been playing at Klaarwater. But, unfortunately for the missionaries, the consequences were not as profitable. At the end of 1810 the Afrikaner returned to their old ways and began to attack the

75. Although the carrying capacity of the veld was much better in the early eighteenth century than it is today it was still poor. The present desert-like conditions of southern Namibia are largely a result of overgrazing. See B. Lau, "Kommando Politics", pp.32-4.

76. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", pp.148-9.

77. Ibid., p.149.

78. See Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.576-81.

79. Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp.333-343.

80. Ibid., pp.786-9.

81. The Albrechts noted in their journal in 1809: "One of our difficulties with the Namaquas is their prejudice against foreigners, particularly against the Hottentots, some of whom we are obliged to hire in our services as they are far better acquainted with agriculture and the building of houses." By "Hottentots" the Albrechts meant colonial Khoikhoi or Oorlams. Quoted by B. Lau, "Kommando Politics", p.63.

82. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.150.

83. Ibid., p.154.

Nama of the lower Orange River, stealing supplies, firearms and ammunition. They also plundered Seidenfaden's station at Pella, wrecking the absent missionary's possessions and causing damage estimated at 4 000 Rijksdaalders.⁸⁴ According to Van der Kemp, "Afrikaner demolished some things belonging to Br Seidenfaden, against whom he had took (sic) some claims, arising from elephants teeth, which he had sold to Brother Seidenfaden".⁸⁵ This was not the only cause of Afrikaner's frustration for he had sent some cattle to the colony under the care of a servant, Hans Drayer, with the intention of exchanging them for a wagon. Wagons were, of course, of crucial importance in the transportation of ivory to the colony. These cattle were confiscated from Drayer by a colonist, who claimed that he owed him money. Drayer sought shelter from Afrikaner's wrath amongst the missionaries, but this merely served to implicate them further in the eyes of the aggrieved outlaw. It certainly did Drayer no good for Afrikaner traced him to Pella and put the unfortunate man to death.⁸⁶

The missionaries at Warm Bad felt sufficiently threatened by this resurgence of violence on the part of the Afrikaners to withdraw from their station and to request the intervention of a commando from the colony. About 1 500 Nama followed them, under the military protection of the Khoikhoi Captain Vlermuis, a convert from the Heirachabis mission. After some indecisive wandering the missionaries retreated to Pella whilst Vlermuis' forces skirmished vigorously with the Afrikaners without, however, being able to prevent the destruction of Warm Bad. By September 1811 the colonial commando had failed, like others before it, to make contact with the Afrikaners and the missionaries, realising that their request for a commando had compromised them and that their position remained extremely vulnerable, abandoned the north-western frontier to recoup in Cape Town.⁸⁷

The expulsion of the missionaries from Warm Bad and Pella was a notable setback for the proponents of Christian civilisation but it was, however, a temporary one. Indeed, the incident is more symptomatic of the success achieved by Christiaan Albrecht and his following than it is of their failures. Afrikaner's attack was prompted by the inability of the missionaries to ensure safe, regular and economic contact for him with the Cape colony. It was also a frustrated admission that this objective was impossible without them. Significantly Afrikaner directed his attacks on the property and not the persons of the missionaries. The note of petulance in the threat which he

84. Ibid., pp.193-96.

85. Quoted by Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.228, n.17.

86. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.193.

87. Ibid., pp.193-8. See also Campbell's account of this incident in his *Travels*, pp.376-377.

mouthed during the destruction on Pella - dat als het hem gelukt, al de buiten-menschen naar de Caap te verjagen, dat dan de Gouverneur zelve voor hem en voetval moet doen, en om frede smeken⁸⁸ - is an indication that he was behaving as he was from a sense of outraged injury rather than congenital depravity. His was the cruel disappointment of betrayed expectations - the missionaries had not played their part.

Afrikaner was not the only one to express dissatisfaction with the conduct of LMS missionaries in great Namaqualand. Van der Kemp was fiercely critical of Seidenfaden's involvement in the ivory trade whilst Christiaan Albrecht's conduct was not beyond reproach either. His readiness in summoning colonial commando and his reliance of Vlermuis' protection had involved him in military and political issues which compromised the mission. In Cape Town Albrechts had persuaded the governor to grant him "two hundred pounds of weight of gunpowder, four hundred of lead and twenty firelocks".⁸⁹ Van der Kemp could not help but speculate that:

the wandering hordes of Br. Albrecht, abusing his pliable character, have sent him to the Cape as a tool to obtain by his instrumentality as much powder and firearms as possible to commit more depredations as Afrikaner ever is said to be guilty of, and that upon this reason they ly fake or exaggerate representations of (...) dangers, drove my amiable (...) Br. to the Caroo (...)⁹⁰

The principal beneficiaries of the Afrikaners' attack on the mission stations were indeed Vlermuis and his followers who now enjoyed all the advantages that Afrikaner had failed to achieve: access to firearms, ammunition and the Cape market through legitimate mission approved channels. Thus bolstered Vlermuis was able to guarantee the presence of a large, grateful and dependent community in the vicinity of Great Namaqualand which would act as both a defence and a field of labour for the missionaries. Albrechts hastened to return to Pella in 1812 reinforced by the missionaries Ebner, Sass, Helm and Schmelen.⁹¹ By 1813 the mission at Pella was composed of more than 600 people, including Captains Vlermuis and the Bondelswart. Because of the barrenness of the region, large segments of the group were periodically obliged to wander nomadically in search of pasture and water for their livestock. In these wanderings they were accompanied by some of the missionaries. All concerned felt considerable unease at this dividing their numbers and presenting the malcontent Afrikaners with a vulnerable target.⁹² When John

88. "That if he felt like it he could drive all the outlying people to the Cape and the Governor himself would have to approach him in order to make peace." Quoted in Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.197.

89. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.194.

90. Quoted in Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.228, n.27.

91. Du Plessis, *Christian Missions*, pp.117-8.

92. Campell, *Travels*, pp.300-6.

Campbell, the inspector of LMS missions, visited Pella in 1813 he reported that: "The missionaries say that the Namaquas are naturally a timid people. For a long time after they had fled across the Great River, from a dread of Afrikaner, the least rising of dust or sand excited great consternation; they were sure it was Afrikaner coming against them."⁹³ For this reason it was imperative to make peace with Jager Afrikaner and Campbell set himself this task. He sent Jager Afrikaner a conciliatory letter and in April 1814 the response from the Afrikaners was that they desired a missionary, Bibles and hymn books.⁹⁴ In May 1815, Christiaan Albrecht travelled to Afrikaner's kraal. Johan Ebner and his wife followed him in June and in July of that same year it fell to Ebner to baptise Jager Afrikaner.⁹⁵

There are several reasons why the baptism of Jager Afrikaner is an appropriate event with which to close this account of the northern Cape frontier zone and the Orange River. Although the various processes of closure - political, economic and social - were by 1815 far from complete, there is a symbolic significance in Jager Afrikaner's baptism that transcends its religious function. By accepting Christianity Jager and his gang, the erstwhile terrors of the northern frontier, were accepting, however feeble its constraints might be, the distant authority of the colonial government mediated through the agency of missionaries.⁹⁶ In this respect they were falling into line with the Oorlam societies of Transorania to the east.

Much of the subsequent history of these societies during the nineteenth century is concerned with the shifting balance of power and the changing relationships between them, their missionary mentors and the colonial government. Though colonial control or political closure of the frontier zone by the colonial government seemed, at times, non-existent, this should not blind us to the fact that, after 1815, the idiom of government both within and between political units, was that

93. Ibid., pp.305-6.

94. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.198.

95. Ibid.

96. When John Philip asked Afrikaner, some years later, what he thought of the British government's suggestion that missionaries and their followers should be removed to within the boundaries of the colony, he replied: "I have no objection to be under the British government, if I am to be treated as a freeman; but I can never consent to live in the neighbourhood of the farmers. Let government point out to me a situation where I can live, with my people, at a distance from the boors, and I shall accompany you to that spot. I and my people are willing to serve the English government, but we are not willing to be slaves. Namaqualand is a desert country; it is hard living in Namaqualand; but I would rather bear any kind of hardship, in the wilderness, from the hand of God, than be subject to the continual and degrading vexations I should have reason to apprehend from the tyranny and injustice of man." Philip, *Researches*, Vol. 2, p.322.

which the missionaries had encouraged. The rules and forms, the values and structures of political life were coloured by colonial Christianity.⁹⁷

This implies that social closure was accompanying political closure. As Christianity gained ground amongst the Oorlams it became an important cultural reference point. Literacy and baptism became pre-requisites for membership of the societies' elites - a development that did not always have the uncontested approval of the less acculturated. Cultural conflicts within Oorlam societies were often accompanied by opposition to the missionaries' attempts to impose a cultural hegemony from above. In this, as in political affairs generally, the Oorlam societies did not forget to guard their independence and processes of closure were by no means straightforward.⁹⁸

In 1819 Jager Afrikaner achieved a long standing ambition when he travelled with the missionary Robert Moffat (who had replaced Ebner in January 1818) to Cape Town. In its relief to see the scourge of the north tamed the government granted Afrikaner an ox-wagon and a passport, then ensuring him legal access to the colony and facilitating the transportation of commodities.⁹⁹ This was a notable political success for the LMS, encouraging the government to place greater confidence in missionaries as agents of control. It was also a sign that Jager's conversion, with its implicit submission to LMS authority, had bound the Afrikaners more tightly to the nexus of the colonial market. This state of affairs allowed the Afrikaners, like other Oorlam or "Bastaard" societies to the east, to consolidate peaceful trade relations between the Sotho-Tswana in the north and the colony in the south. In this way the magnetic influence of the Cape Town market was felt more strongly within the frontier zone but it should not be forgotten that this zone itself was constantly expanding. The extreme fragility of the local environment caused the new Oorlam polities, whose economic base remained essentially a pastoral one, to reach far beyond the river. The efforts of the missionaries to create sedentary societies, rooted in one spot by their interest in agricultural activities, failed. The familiar dynamics of *trekboer* expansion were perpetuated by the increasingly well-armed Oorlam societies on the edge of the frontier as they were drawn

97. See Legassick, "The Griqua, Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries" and Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas* for the influence of missionaries in the subsequent history of the Griqua. B. Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* and T. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", consider the missionary influence on the Oorlam and Khoikhoi groups of southern Namibia.

98. For an account of political struggles and tensions within the early Griqua polity see Margaret Kinsman, "Populists and Patriarchs: The Transformation of the Captaincy at Griqua Town, 1804-1822", in Alan Mabin, (ed.), *Organization and Economic Change* (Johannesburg, 1989), pp.1-20.

99. Dederling, "Southern Namibia", p.206.

deeper into the interior in their quest for ivory, cattle and unfree labour.¹⁰⁰ Years of raids and commando activity against the Herero to the north west and Sotho-Tswana to the north-east of the river were to follow.

In this respect it is possible to regard the Oorlam societies as pioneers of the Cape colonial frontier, a frontier that, by 1815, had reached far beyond the northern bank of the Orange River. It is, however, important to realise that though the Oorlam groups were very similar to the *trekboers* of the colony they were, in certain respects, not the same at all. Politically they remained distinct from the *trekboers*, retaining a degree of independence and self government that marked them off from societies south of the Orange River. The most obvious point of all - the fact that the majority of their members were racially or somatically distinct from the *trekboers* of the colony - should not be considered a negligible distinction simply because the societies had so much in common at the technical or economic levels. By the beginning of the nineteenth century their inferior social and political status and their distinct racial identity were closely inter-related.

The lands along the Orange River remained marginal and their possession by Oorlam societies was in a way an indication of the marginality of these societies themselves. They had avoided becoming the exploited underclass of the *trekboers* by a combination of resistance and retreat and it is the remoteness of the Orange River from the centre of colonial power that both shared and preserved their distinctiveness. The fact that the Oorlam groups had, albeit temporarily, escaped the suppression experienced by the "Bastaards", "Bastaard-Hottentots" and Khoisan within the colony did not prevent them from seeking to subjugate less powerful people in their vicinity. Not all the survivors of the era of insecurity had attached themselves voluntarily to Oorlam groups - as many Korana, Einiqua, Namaqua and San had done. Some began as oppressed clients, servants or semi-slaves, gradually losing their inferior status and merging into the groups' multi-ethnic identity. Others achieved a precarious existence outside of Oorlam societies though frequently subject to raids or harassment from them. Notable examples were the Korana groups of the Orange River islands (which included many non-Korana members) who survived to be a thorn in the flesh of the colony until the 1870s.¹⁰¹ The Orange River, therefore, especially in its western parts, remained a frontier deep into the nineteenth century and the societies of its immediate hinterland remained frontier societies.

100. For the growing interest in slave raiding across the Cape frontier sparked by the Cobbing hypothesis see Elizabeth Eldredge, "Slave Raiding Across the Cape Frontier", in Eldredge and Morton, *Slavery In South Africa*, pp.93-126.

101. See T. Strauss, *War Along The Orange*, and R. Ross, "The !Kora Wars".

When, in the 1830s, the *trekboers* finally launched themselves across the Orange River in significant numbers - the Great Trek - it was in the environmentally superior eastern regions of Transorania that this advance occurred and only after the San of the Sneeu-berg had been pacified. This pacification had been achieved by a combination of continuous commando activity, but also by the more subtle and insidious practice of gift-giving. Even though missions to the San had been a failure, San resistance had been fatally undermined by the infiltration of seemingly peaceful colonists into their territory. Once the colonists had established themselves beyond the Sneeu-berg the San were unable to prevent the destruction of their societies. They suffered increasing persecution from their pastoralist neighbours, witnessing the alienation of their land to stock-farmers and the inexorable erosion of their independence.¹⁰² Those who were not killed or captured retreated deep within inhospitable Bushmanland in an attempt to survive or to avoid virtual enslavement on colonial farms.

In Bushmanland their numbers dwindled towards extinction as they were hunted down by Boer or "Bastaard" commandos which were determined to turn the Cape thirstland into an area of San-free trekveld. For the first time Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" pastoralists, driven by intolerable pressure from the white colonists, began to take up an almost permanent residence within Bushmanland. In the 1840s a mission station was established at Amandelboom in the western Kareeberg and another in the eastern Kareeberg. The targets of these enterprises were the Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" settlers who now dwelt there. In December 1847 the entire north-western Cape, as far as the Orange River, was annexed as part of the colony. Bushmanland was declared a communal grazing area (or *trekvelden*) in which white, Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" farmers had equal rights. The rights of the San were not considered.

As the numbers of these intruders grew the government recognised the need for new magistracies in the north-western Cape. These were established in Calvinia, Namaqualand and Fraserburg in the 1850s. The world of the independent San had now shrunk to the most arid areas of Bushmanland but, even here, they were not safe. In 1861 the magistrate of Namaqualand, Louis Anthing, received a complaint from a certain Jaco Fluik, a San, that his people were being killed by mixed commandos of whites, "Bastaards" and Khoikhoi. Anthing received permission from his superiors to investigate these charges and subsequently heard many sickening accounts from witnesses of massacres of the San in the last decade preceding his visit. These crimes were no

102. The forthcoming work of the archaeologist Garth Sampson will do much to illuminate the interactions which occurred between the colonists and the San of the Seckoei River - Agter Sneeu-berg district in the early nineteenth century.

doubt very similar to those which the colonists had been perpetrating on the San since the beginning of the eighteenth century but to Anthing they were unacceptable. He estimated that there were only 500 San left alive and that many of the dead had not been shot, but starved to death.¹⁰³

Anthing believed that to protect the San a magistrate should be established at Kenhardt and land should be set aside for the San. The first of these suggestions was approved by the government, but the expenses involved in implementing the proposals caused the plan to be shelved. With considerable emotion Anthing attempted to champion the cause of the doomed people, but his energies and sympathies were an annoyance to the authorities. As a result he was transferred to Cradock and, once his salary was stopped, he was forced to resign. Nothing further was done to protect the San; no magistracy was established, no land was put aside for them, no food was given to them and none of the perpetrators of the crimes against them were arrested.¹⁰⁴

Literally starving, the San were forced to steal livestock in order to stay alive. If caught, they were either murdered by the local farmers or sent to Cape Town as convicts to work as labourers on the Breakwater. Upon their release few survived for long since their families had been destroyed and their land taken. Some joined the Korana uprising of 1868 but there was no place left for them on earth. Dia!kwain, one of the /Xam who, before they disappeared completely, passed on his people's stories to Bleek and Lloyd, explained what happened after death.

The wind when we die, our own wind blows.
For we, the /Xam people, each of us has his wind;
each one has a cloud that comes out when he dies.
Therefore the wind when we die, the wind blows dust
covering the tracks, the footprints we made
when walking about living, with nothing the matter,
when we still knew nothing of sickness and death.

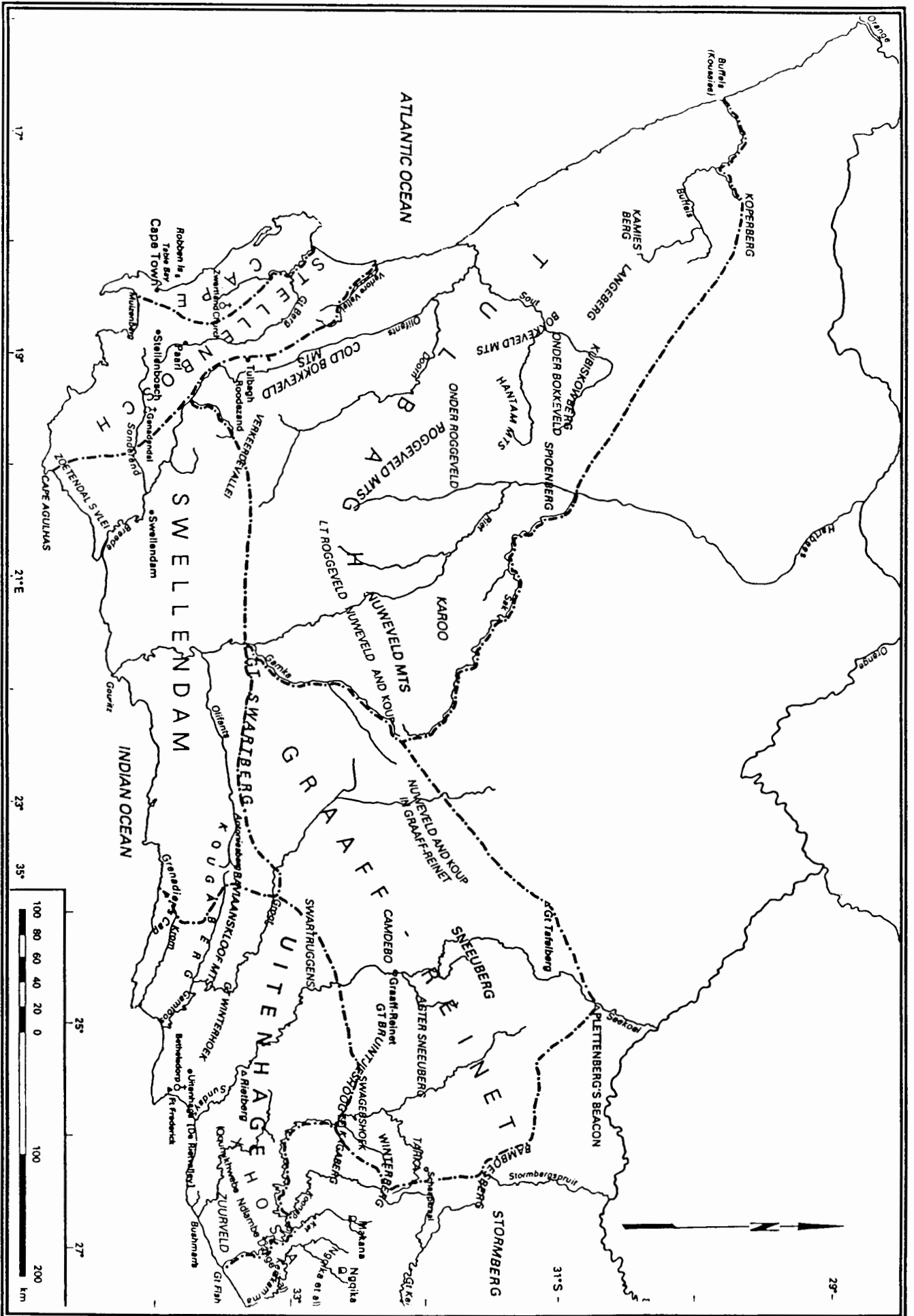
If not for this wind, our spoor would still show,
our spoor would still show us as if we still lived.¹⁰⁵

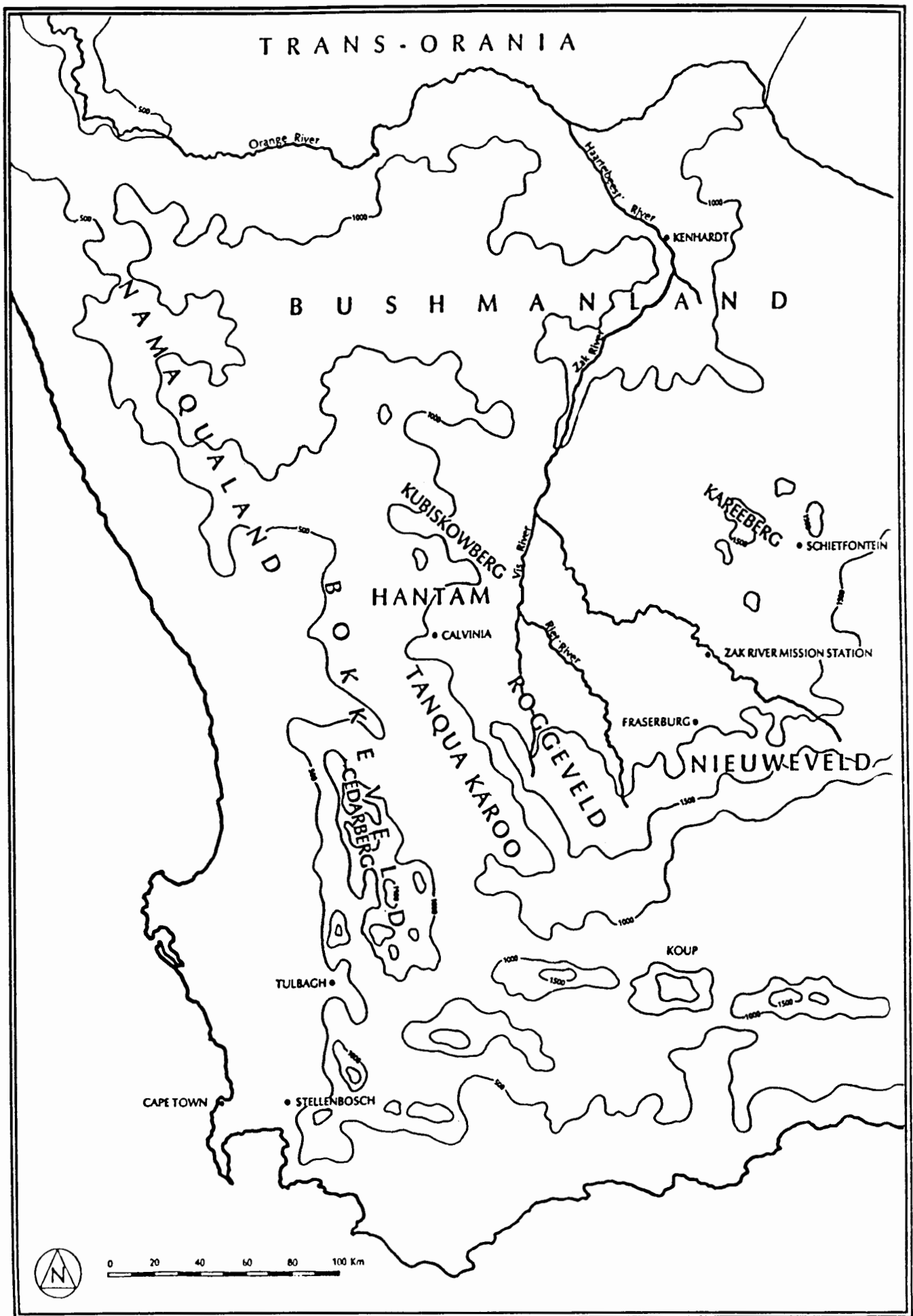
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104. Ibid.

105. This poetic rendering of Dia!kwain's explanation was made from the translation of Bleek and Lloyd by Stephen Watson in P. Skotnes, (ed.), *Sound From The Thinking Strings*, p.113.

CAPE DISTRICTS AND THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY, 1805





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